

Habitat for Humanity builds homes for 19 families

*Plans to build
Restore in 2023*

BY TIM TRAINOR
Redmond Spokesman

Bend-Redmond Habitat for Humanity recently finished construction of ten townhomes and nine accessory dwelling units in Redmond, providing housing for 19 local families.

"This is a really big deal for us," said Melissa Kamanya, director of grants management for the nonprofit. "It's really exciting that this project has been completed and families are moving in."

Kamanya said the ten, three-bedroom homes were purchased by low- to middle-income residents who attended financial training with Habitat for Humanity and expressed a need to secure stable housing.

According to Kamanya, one family moving into a home is a single father of two young children. After a difficult divorce, the three of them moved into the man's parents' basement to try get back on their feet. The father worked hard to save money for a place of their own, but the high cost of housing and two children to care for made it difficult.



Bend-Redmond Habitat for Humanity built 10 new homes and 9 dwelling units in Redmond, which marked the 200th families served by the organization.

Kamanya said the resident "can't wait to feel like my kids are in a safe community, where I know everyone and where everyone supports each other." As he was pre-

paring to move in, he said he was looking forward to living near a park and giving his children their first bedroom of their own.

The location of the homes

and their new residents are not being identified. Some residents of the homes have been victims of violence and Habitat for Humanity has a policy of not publicizing

their new addresses.

The one bedroom accessory dwelling units on the property are the first of their kind built by Bend-Redmond Habitat. They required part-

nerships with the city of Redmond in order to permit and construct the homes. The city, as well as local, private donors, provided considerable funding for the project, said Kamanya.

John Roberts, Redmond's deputy city manager, said "these affordable townhomes and ADUs are creating long lasting legacies of hope and change for hard working families in Redmond."

Kamanya also noted the build is a "significant milestone" for the organization. The 19 families who moved in mean that Habitat for Humanity has now built housing for 200 families in Central Oregon.

But that's not the only big news in Redmond for Habitat for Humanity. Kamanya said they plan to open a ReStore location in Redmond in the fall of 2023. Kamanya said they plan to erect a new building near the current Motel 6 in Redmond, south of downtown between Highway 97 and Canal. The store will offer employment and volunteer opportunities, as well as a place to recycle and purchase discounted materials.

Habitat has similar stores operating in Bend and Sisters.

Reporter: ttrainor@redmondspokesman.com

Redmond School Board unanimously selects former Bend principal to fill vacant seat

BY BRYCE DOLE
CO Media Group

The Redmond School Board approved a controversial former Bend principal to fill an open board seat for the upcoming school year, drawing concern from some parents whose children attended the high school she led for more than six years.

Alice DeWittie, the former principal of Summit High School in Bend, was unanimously appointed by the board June 22 to fill the vacant seat after board member Jill Cummings resigned. The position runs through June 30, 2023.

DeWittie left her job as principal of Summit High at the end of the 2017-2018 academic year, shortly after some parents voiced concern over an email and essay she wrote that included references to Christianity. The writing suggested, in part, that public education should be restructured to conform with Christian values, according to news reports. At least one person complained to the district about her writing, but district officials concluded she had not violated policy.

DeWittie did not return requests for comment prior to press time Tuesday.

Some families remain concerned that DeWittie's religious beliefs could compromise her ability to maintain religious neutrality as a board member.

At least one parent, who volunteered as a robotics coach at Summit High and whose children attended the high school when DeWittie was there, said he plans to attend Wednesday's board meeting and speak out against her appointment. He said his concerns are not with any religious beliefs she expresses but with the way she leads.

"I always appreciate people who step up for civic service, however, my observations of Alice, her decisions and her be-

haviors, she is the wrong person for this type of role," said Scot Brees, who runs a nonprofit in Bend. As a volunteer at the school, Brees said he frequently felt belittled in arguments with DeWittie, adding that she ruled by "intimidation and fear."

Redmond Superintendent Charan Cline said Tuesday that he was aware of the controversy that surrounded DeWittie when she left her role in Bend, but said that he had not discussed the matter with her specifically. He noted that there is a large body of law in education systems around respecting belief systems, including the separation of church and state, but said board members are free to hold whatever personal beliefs they wish.

"I'm not overly concerned," Cline said of DeWittie's history as an educator. "Every board member comes to the table with their own set of values."

Cline said that he's hopeful DeWittie brings her knowledge and years of experience as a professional educator to the board. Cline said Monday that Cummings had resigned due to "personal reasons."

But when Stewart Fritchman, a vocal critic of DeWittie's who owns a coffee business in Bend, heard that the board had approved DeWittie to the in-

terim role, he said he thought to himself: "You've got to be kidding me. Did they not do their homework?"

DeWittie did not say in an email to parents in 2017 precisely why she was leaving the school. Fritchman noted that it was clear that a growing number of parents were alarmed about her religious comments in the school.

The board chose DeWittie after interviews with five candidates. They included Melissa Williams, the executive director of Every Child Central Oregon, which helps children and families in the foster care system; Russell Johnson, a data center operations analyst for a cyber security company; Marv Kaplan, a retired owner of a consulting company who serves on the board of the St. Charles Foundation, Central Oregon Veterans Ranch and the Rotary Club of Redmond; and Valerie Nichols, a real estate developer who worked for the city of Redmond from 2017-2021.

In a box below, the form asks the applicant whether they intend to run in the May 2023 election that would serve the remaining two years of the four-year term. DeWittie filled in a box that said: Maybe.

Reporter: 541-617-7854, bdole@bendbulletin.com



DeWittie



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Fentanyl found after burglary arrest

BY TIM TRAINOR
Redmond Spokesman

A Redmond man was arrested Wednesday with what police say was a "commercial" quantity of fentanyl.

Levi Towry, 37, was charged with unlawful possession and attempted delivery of a Schedule II controlled substance, as well as an unrelated burglary charge out of Bend.

Police allege Towry was importing pills containing

fentanyl from Portland with an intent to distribute them in Deschutes County.

Police say they followed Towry's vehicle to the Village Squire Motel, 629 SW 5th in downtown Redmond. When Towry pulled into the lot, detectives detained him on the Bend burglary charge, then secured a search warrant. Police allegedly then found "a commercial quantity of counterfeit oxycodone pills containing fentanyl" on

Towry.

According to statute a "commercial quantity" is five grams or more of a mixture or substance containing a detectable amount of fentanyl, or any derivative of fentanyl as defined by the rules of the Oregon Board of Pharmacy.

Towry was transported to the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office Jail, then to the emergency room at St. Charles, Bend. He was eventually cited and released.

Doug MacLeod



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