

Summer camps booked solid, build community

By **ERIC A. HOWALD**
Of the *Keizertimes*

Salem-Keizer Public Schools are hosting nearly 200 camp sessions this summer, and it still wasn't enough to meet the interest of students and families.

"I am still getting calls every day to see if we can squeeze more kids in, but we are full," said Nichole Spearman-Eskelson, the district's coordinator of

summer programming. Each of the various camps being offered topped out at 25-30 students.

After a year of what can, generously, be described as "abnormal," the camps are providing opportunities to reconnect with classrooms, teachers and friends throughout the district.

The programs are being funded, in large part, through grants from the

Oregon Department of Education. The Oregon Legislature allotted more than \$200 million in state and federal funding to offer enrichment programs for K-8 students. For high school students, only credit-recovery programming is covered by the same funding.

"The grant funding completely changed the landscape," said Spearman-Eskelson. "Because it was short notice, we

had a meeting with all the district teachers and qualified instructional assistants with an interest in teaching a camp. Most of the camp content came from them."

The array of free programming includes topics such as foreign languages, engineering, cooking, performing arts and fused glass. Whenever possible, professionals working in the various fields have

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