

Online academy is open to out-of-district students

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Nearly three years ago, the Astoria School District unveiled the online Oregon Choice Academy to capture home-schooled students, amid lowering enrollment and budget cuts.

There are now 14 students using the academy, said Superintendent Craig Hoppes,

a few of whom don't live in Clatsop County. The district, he added, has to go public and state how many slots are in the program.

As of now, out-of-district students in the Oregon Choice Academy must first get a release from their own resident district. But by law, beginning March 1 through April 1 of each year, students do not have to have permis-

sion from their resident district to attend a school district outside their resident district, as long as the district that they plan to attend has designated the number of slots that will be available.

He recommended 25 slots for out-of-district Oregon Choice Academy students, and was granted the amount Wednesday unanimously by the Astoria School Board.

When the district initially reached out to families of home-schooled students in 2012, said Hoppes, it initially gained 10 to 15 students, along with the \$5,800 in state funding per student.

"This spring, I'll make another outreach," said Hoppes.

Oregon Connections Academy, the largest public online charter school, has about 60 students in Clatsop County

out of its 3,700 statewide. But Astoria schools offer features it can't, such as access to the district's resources and in-class support, and a teacher who will meet them in-person, in the library for assistance, Hoppes said.

Hoppes said many families home-school for religious reasons, and after giving it a try, some send their kids to public school.

"Parents have to spend six to eight hours a day with kids," said Hoppes, adding that one of the most popular aspects of Astoria's program is the use of curriculum from Calvert, one of the nation's largest providers of online schooling for school districts.

For more information on the Oregon Choice Academy, visit <http://oregonchoicek-8.org/>



Submitted photo

Life Flight Network will base a twin engine Augusta 109 helicopter either at the Astoria Regional Airport or at Columbia Memorial Hospital.

Life Flight going coastal

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AURORA — Life Flight Network, the largest nonprofit air medical transport service in the U.S., will open a 24/7 base in Astoria by May 15 to improve access to air medical resources along the Oregon and Washington coasts.

It will station a twin-engine Augusta 109 helicopter locally, along with three flight paramedics, three flight nurses, four pilots and two mechanics.

"We're still debating whether we're going to the hospital or the airport," said Regional Director Jacob Dalstra of Life Flight Network, which will initially lease an executive hangar from the Port of Astoria at the Astoria Regional Airport. The Port Commission on Tuesday

unanimously approved a lease.

Dalstra said Life Flight has served the area for decades, but that having a base in Astoria could save 20 to 25 minutes in travel time between the North Coast and either Longview, Wash., or the Portland metro area.

And the helicopter Life Flight is basing in the Astoria-Warrenton area is instrument-rated, meaning it can fly in low visibility solely by reference of instruments. Presenting Tuesday at the Port Commission, Dalstra said Life Flight has GPS approaches to hospitals in Ocean Beach Hospital in Ilwaco, Wash.; Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria; Providence Seaside Hospital and the Tillamook Regional Medical Center approved by the Federal Aviation Administration.

The helicopter, said Dalstra, will serve the coast from South Bend, Wash., south to Tillamook. It won't have a hoist, but Dalstra added that it can land in a flat 100-by-100-foot area.

A consortium of Oregon Health & Science University, Legacy Emanuel Medical Center, Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center in Boise, Idaho, and Providence Health & Services — Oregon own and operate Life Flight Network, which covers Oregon, Washington, Idaho and western Montana.

"Life Flight and Columbia Memorial Hospital have a long history of working together to serve the needs of our local communities," said CEO Erik Thorsen from CMH. "We are excited to see this important enhancement in our collaboration with Life Flight. Access to a lo-

cal helicopter will dramatically shorten a patient's transfer time if they need a higher level of care."

His comments of support were echoed by hospital leaders across the intended coverage area. The next closest air ambulance is REACH Air Medical Services, which has a helicopter stationed in North Bend and mostly serves southern Oregon, California and Texas.

"Providence Seaside Hospital depends on Life Flight services for our patients suffering from cardiac events and other life-threatening trauma," says Bonnie Thompson, chief operating officer and chief nursing executive for Providence Seaside Hospital. "Having a Life Flight base here on the North Coast will be a tremendous help whenever we need to transport a patient immediately."

Coordinated Care Organization awards funds

PORTLAND — Columbia Pacific Coordinated Care Organization (CCO) recently awarded more than \$85,000 to eight community wellness programs throughout Columbia, Clatsop and Tillamook counties.

Local recipients included:

- North Coast Prevention Works, awarded \$15,000 to fund a campaign to prevent underage drinking in Clatsop County.

- Sunset Empire Park & Recreation District, awarded more than \$5,000 for a project in partnership with Providence Seaside Hospital to provide wellness services, including fitness access, fitness tracking, health coaching and mental health services to improve the overall health and well-being for 45 Oregon Health Plan members.

- Lower Columbia Time Bank, awarded \$1,500 to focus on its wellness efforts in partnership with Clatsop County Department of Public Health, expanding and tracking support for members' wellness activities, encouraging members to work together on health-related issues and increasing membership through classes and collaborations with other community groups.

The Columbia Pacific CCO board of directors created the Community Wellness Investment Fund to encourage innovation, collaboration and health care transformation in the communities it serves. The funds are designated to support local efforts that are sustainable and aligned with the local community's priorities for addressing health inequities and gaps in services or care.

Other organizations receiving funding include:

- SAFE (Support Advocacy Freedom Empower-

ment) of Columbia County, awarded \$15,000 for a project to reduce dating and sexual violence and victimization among teens.

- The Northwest Regional Education Service District (NWRES), awarded \$15,000 to fund a coordinator of Early Childhood Health and Education Clinics in Clatsop and Columbia counties. This is the second year for the clinic in Clatsop County and the first year for Columbia County.

- Tillamook County Health Department Family Health Centers, awarded almost \$15,000 for an integrated program designed to decrease tobacco use among pregnant women.

- Columbia County Mental Health, awarded more than \$10,000 to expand the work started last year by NWRES to provide suicide prevention and training for school staff, youth, adults, community partners and parents in Clatsop and Columbia counties.

- Food Roots, awarded \$7,500 to support the Grow Healthy program designed to oversee low-income gardening trainings and build a sustainable network of Tillamook County gardens, resources and opportunities.

Established in September 2012, Columbia Pacific CCO coordinates health services for more than 25,000 Oregon Health Plan members in Columbia, Clatsop and Tillamook counties, along with the coastal portion Douglas county around Reedsport. For more information, visit www.colpac-health.org

Petitioners gather signatures for local Port control

Signature gatherers will be at the following locations to collect signatures for the Committee for Democratic Change at the Port of Astoria's ballot initiative to keep Port control local:

- 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. today and Friday: Seaside Library, 1131 Broadway.
- 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Satur-

day and Sunday: Three Cups Coffee, 279 W. Marine Drive, Astoria; Blue Scorcher, 1493 Duane St., Astoria; Seaside Coffee House, 5 N. Holladay Drive, Seaside.

- During regular business hours: Adagio, 1174 Commercial St., Astoria.

This ballot initiative is to improve the election of Port of Astoria commissioners so

that each commissioner is directly accountable to their voters, organizers said.

For information, go to www.kepportcontrollocal.com

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