

Preschool: Parents focus more on price, location

Continued from Page 1A

dividends yet. The program, created by Western Oregon University's Teaching Research Institute, is in its second year. Not many parents understand what it means yet, Bisping said, and more are focused on price and location.

Mestrich said her office is now concentrating on expanding such professional development among preschools and daycares, and the understanding among parents about quality rating. More than half of the county's licensed providers are now following in Bisping's footsteps to become quality-rated programs.

"The professional development aspect is what holds most people back," Mestrich said, adding the county lacks higher-level courses in early childhood education.

Clatsop Community College recently dropped its early childhood education program because of lagging enrollment. Mestrich said her office convinced the college to bring back an early childhood education class, refers people to online options and provides professional development classes for local providers. They are also planning classes taught to preschool providers by kindergarten teachers in math, literacy and social development.

"They're more excited about being high-quality, of course, because Oregon's getting more money for child care," Mestrich said. "It's really kind of changed the look of child care."

Preschool Promise

Last year, the state Legislature allocated \$16 million toward Preschool Promise, an effort to support quality preschool options through partnerships with different providers. The effort has led to an additional 1,300 subsidized preschool slots statewide for kids from families within 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

Fifteen of those subsidized slots are on the bottom floor of Capt. Robert Gray School, where the Astoria School District launched a preschool this fall. Michelle Gardner, head teacher at the preschool, said most of her students are within 100 to 200 percent of the federal poverty level, the next tier of low-income preschoolers who don't make it into Head Start. The district provides transportation for the Head Start students, and Head Start enrolls students in the district's preschool.

The district, in partnership with the Cannon Beach Preschool, applied for the Preschool Promise funding through the states Early Learning Council. Astoria received funding in part because the state Department of Human Services identified large swaths east of the



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Head teacher Michelle Gardner leads students through a lesson about colors and nouns in the bottom floor of Capt. Robert Gray School Monday. Astoria School District's new preschool was funded by Preschool Promise, a state effort to expand preschool options for families within 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

Seaside receives preschool startup grant from the state

By KATHERINE LACAZE
For EO Media Group

SEASIDE — Seaside School District Superintendent Sheila Roley reported the district received a \$60,000 one-year preschool startup grant from the Oregon Department of Education for the 2016-17 school year.

"There is indisputable evidence that children who have preschool experiences ... will thrive in school at a higher level than if they didn't have those experiences," Roley said at last week's district board meeting. "A lot of our students don't have those naturally provided for them."

In applying for the grant, the school district did not intend to compete with other providers in the area, but to augment the services so there would be enough spots for all preschoolers, she said.

The district is partnering with the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, which previously offered a limited preschool option.

The district is taking their partial, three-day-per-week Learning Ladder Preschool program and helping them grow it into a five-day-per-week, full-day preschool, which is a requirement of the grant, Roley said. The students must have access to at least 900 hours of instructional time, similar to what a primary student would receive.

"It's really exciting that we're getting this off the ground," she said, adding if the program is successful, the district can reapply for sustaining grants.

Part of this initiative will entail monthly professional meetings involving the preschool and kindergarten teachers so they can collaborate and "try to build a very smooth transition from preschool into kindergarten, so the preschools are aligned with what kindergarten readiness requires," Roley said.

The board unanimously approved a memorandum of understanding to work with the recreation district on this program.

"The funds are channeled through us; they're doing most of the labor," Roley said.

Astoria Bridge as the county's only "hot spot," based on high rates of poverty, public assistance and mobility of families with school-age children. Gardner said there are already four kids on the preschool's wait list, some of whom Astoria is referring to Head Start, which is still trying to find enough students for a third preschool classroom in Seaside.

"We're trying to partner with home preschoolers, just opening up more places," Gardner said. "We're trying to work with all providers to make sure every child does preschool."

Pay for success

More than 2 1/2 years ago, Clatsop Kinder Ready was funded by the Oregon Community Foundation.

"We've brought about a great deal of awareness about the ages 0 to 5, and what goes in to helping a child develop, and how critical that is to the rest of their life," said Dan Gaffney, a former principal in Seaside and head of Clatsop Kinder Ready.

In a partnership with Way to

Wellville community wellness program, Gaffney is now working on a grant application that would study the feasibility of privately funded, universal preschool for kids in Clatsop, Tillamook and possibly Columbia counties through the U.S. Department of Education's Preschool Pay for Success grants.

The model attracts private investors to pay for high-quality preschool programs in a given area, with the understanding it can help avoid societal costs in the future. Gaffney said Clatsop Kinder Ready would be working with existing preschool programs. If a local area meets certain goals, such as reducing special education usage, it pays the investors back. Goldman Sachs invested in such a program in Salt Lake City's Granite School District, dramatically lowering the number of children kindergarten through fifth grade needing special education services.

"They see this as a way of improving society," Gaffney said of Pay for Success investors. "They're taking the risk

... that they may not make back their money. They understand that if we don't provide a quality preschool experience, that has a lasting effect on society."

The U.S. Department of Education has made available \$2.8 million for the feasibility studies. Gaffney said there will be seven to 14 awards worth \$200,000 to \$400,000 each, with the announcement of winners in December.

Homes: 'We need to find a way for people who work here to also live here'

Continued from Page 1A

Dave Pollard and his wife, who regularly travel to historic districts, said that introducing miniature dwellings does not improve such areas.

"We have never seen an area that was successful and presented itself well that had these things like tiny houses, trailers and so forth," he said.

Commissioner President Dave Pearson later argued that, in his view, historic preservation is "never supposed to be a moment frozen in time."

"Astoria's about so much more than that. We've always defied the odds because we've never allowed that to define us," he said.

Cronin clarified that the proposed code changes would not pre-empt the city's Design Review Committee and Historic Landmarks Commission processes.

Several speakers expressed concern that many ADUs would not add permanent housing to Astoria but would be used as vacation rentals.

However, Commissioner Daryl Moore pointed out that vacation rentals are not permitted in residential zones, though he acknowledged that enforcement is lacking.

"They would still be illegal, to have a nightly or weekly vacation rental, even if it is an accessory dwelling unit," he said.

Responding to concerns about excess parking, Cronin suggested the commission require all new parking associated with ADUs to be off-street.

To be continued

Though none spoke in favor of the proposal, residents acknowledged the reality of the housing crunch and commended Cronin and the Planning Commission for

trying to remedy it.

Doug Thompson, of Astoria, said increasing housing density is "not a politically pain-free exercise, but I believe it's a necessary one if we are going to increase the supply and, therefore, the affordability of housing all types."

But he and his fellow speakers urged the commission to further investigate the issue, including the challenges other cities have faced after authorizing ADUs.

A handful of speakers felt the ADU proposal was moving too quickly and persuaded the commission to continue the public hearing at the next meeting.

"I just don't think we have enough information as to how it's going to affect our neighborhoods," Katie Rathmell, of Astoria, said.

Moore said the community could benefit from an information session before the commission makes a recommendation to the City Council.

Commissioner Jan Mitchell, who is sympathetic to many of the community's concerns, remarked that the people objecting to the ADUs did not also discuss how to provide affordable housing. She said locals need to be careful not to close off all possible housing solutions in Clatsop County.

"We do need to find a way — and it may not be tiny homes — but we need to find a way for people who work here to also live here," she said, "and right now, it's becoming less and less possible."



HOSPITAL VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

NO ACT OF KINDNESS, NO MATTER HOW SMALL, IS EVER WASTED



Volunteers Are Vital!

The CMH Auxiliary and volunteers have a long history of giving to Columbia Memorial Hospital and its patients. Our volunteers are compassionate, skilled and motivated people who support the CMH mission of caring for our patients in body, mind and spirit. They are indispensable in supporting CMH's commitment to provide the best possible care to people in our community.

- Patient companion
- Lobby ambassador
- Gift Shop retailer
- Courier
- Pet therapist
- Reiki practitioner
- No One Dies Alone (NODA) guardian
- Cookie baker
- Seamstress

Call our Volunteer Coordinator at 503-325-4321 for more information and to apply.



WORRIED ABOUT FORECLOSURE?

If you're struggling to pay your mortgage the Home Rescue Program may be just the help you need. Qualified homeowners may receive:

UP TO

\$20,000

in mortgage payment assistance

UP TO

\$15,000

to bring your mortgage current



Home Rescue Program

Mortgage Payment Assistance + Reinstatement
www.OregonHomeownerHelp.org

APPLICATION SPACE IS LIMITED!

Learn more about the Home Rescue Program at

www.OregonHomeownerHelp.org

