

Head Start programs earn 5-star rating

BY TRISHA WALKER
News staff writer

Two of Mid-Columbia Children's Council Head Start facilities — Country Club and Parkdale — recently received the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) five-star rating from the state of Oregon.

The rating means both sites have met essential evaluation standards that support quality learning for all children — a benchmark the state is suggesting, but not requiring, early education sites to achieve.

MCCC is headquartered in Hood River, but serves Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Klickitat and Jefferson counties. Doreen Hotchkiss, associated director of MCCC, said that the goal is for all Oregon Head Start sites to receive the five-star rating.

A five-star rating shows “all of the staff at the sites are highly qualified early childhood educators,” she said. The rating also covers the health and safety, management and curriculum at each site.

“The state decided all early childhood programs (should) be of quality,” she said, and the QRIS program is a way to ensure consistency in education across the board in Oregon. Those who chose to participate were evaluated on a range of elements “that are essential for quality care and preparing children for kindergarten and beyond,” according to a press release.

The rating “is not something Head Start has to do. It's voluntary for childcare centers, family home centers, but the State really put it out there for all of us because it's striving for quality programs across the board for all children,” Hotchkiss said.

“There's a standard of quality,” she said. “That what I like about the QRIS system, why I wanted to work with my staff to do this rating.”

The five-star rating is also helping to improve four-star sites, most of which depends on staff taking further education courses.



Submitted photo

STAFF AT THE Country Club Head Start and Early Head Start programs accept the QRIS 5 Star Award, including Matthew Solomon, Executive Director, back row left.



Submitted photo

DOREEN HOTCHKISS, Associate Director (left) and Matthew Solomon, Executive Director (right) present the award to Parkdale staff Rosie Manzo and Susan Owens.

MCCC is working closely with Columbia Gorge Community College “as a resource and referral,” Hotchkiss said. Nancy Patton, director of CGCC's Childcare Partners, is working with MCCC to provide “training and support at the college so people can reach this highest rating of a five.”

Head Start runs in tandem

with county school districts to ensure children enter kindergarten ready to learn. While the Parkdale site serves children ages 3-5 and the Country Club site children 2-5, Head Start also has programs that serve pregnant mothers and babies ages 0-3.

At that age, Head Start “is already looking at, what are the skills we can develop for

children that will help them be successful when they get ready for kindergarten and the rest of their lives,” said Hotchkiss.

“We're really proud we did this voluntarily,” she said. “The board of directors is pretty excited two of our sites in Hood River County received what Oregon rates as a five star.”

Soroptimist accepts 'Woman of Distinction' nominations

Soroptimist International of Hood River invites individuals and organizations to honor a woman in their midst whose professional or volunteer work has made a distinctive difference in the life of Hood River County or in the lives of women and girls. Nominations for the service club's annual “Women of Distinction” award are being accepted until Thursday, April 30th.

“We have been honoring amazing women in our community for over 40 years. We know we will never run out of worthy nominees,” says committee chair Jean Harmon. “Our larger community benefits from the work of these outstanding citizens and we ask your help in making sure they are recognized.”

Nomination forms, guidelines and a list of previous winners are available at Waucoma Bookstore, on Facebook at Soroptimist International Hood River, or by calling Barbara Young at 541-490-

1996. Nominations need to include all activities that show the nominee's dedication, effectiveness and vision. Letters of support are particularly helpful.

Winners and their nominators will be notified in early May, and their names and pictures will be announced in the Hood River News, on local radio stations and on the Soroptimist Hood River Facebook page. The Women of Distinction awards luncheon is scheduled for Wednesday, May 27, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the Best Western Plus Hood River Inn. Tickets are \$24 each and will be available at Waucoma Bookstore in early May.

Soroptimist of Hood River, part of Soroptimist International, is a business and professional women's service organization dedicated to empowering the lives of women and girls in local communities and throughout the world. For more information about Soroptimist Hood River, contact Barbara Young at barby@gorge.net.

Equipment rentals available through OSU/Gorge Grown

Ever want to try out some kitchen equipment for food preservation before you buy them for yourself? Or need some kitchen equipment to use for a short period of time? Or to try out some equipment that you might want to use for your up and coming food business?

Oregon State University Extension Service and Gorge Grown are pleased to be able to offer local residents the opportunity to rent kitchen equipment for food preservation to be used in your own home!

Rentable items include crock pots, cookie sheets and pressure cookers. For a com-

plete listing of items, visit www.gorgegrown.com/osuggequipmentrental.

OSU Extension Service has made every effort to ensure that the equipment being rented is in good working order, is clean, and ready for use. However, we strongly recommend that you sanitize all equipment before use to ensure food safety.

In order to maintain our equipment and provide a positive rental experience for all of our participants, we ask that you return all equipment to us on or before the due date. We ask that you clean, sanitize, and reassemble the equipment prior to return.



Viola Hutson

Viola Hutson turns 90

Viola Hutson will celebrate her 90th birthday on April 11, from 2-4 p.m. at Down Manor, 1950 Sterling Place, Hood River.

Viola was born in North Dakota, the third child and first daughter of a family of 11 children, and raised in Nyssa, Ore. She moved to Hood River around 1943 and

married Speed Hutson in December 1961.

She worked for Diamond Fruit beginning in 1952, a career that spanned over 50 years.

She has three children: Eldon, Jerry, and Selma.

The family invites her friends to celebrate with her; please, no presents.

Riverside Church dedicates kitchen on Sunday

Riverside Community Church, 4th and State Streets, invites community members to celebrate the completion of its new kitchen after the 10:30 a.m. worship service on April 12.

“We are thrilled about the new ministries that we will

be able to provide to the community,” stated Rev. Vicky Stifter. “Planning is already underway for opportunities such as job training, community meals, and education for children.” The kitchen upgrade was made possible by a gift

from Scott and Elaine Johnson. Scott died in June 2014.

Chef Kathy Watson, a member of the kitchen planning team, will create refreshments for the reception that will follow the ceremony.

Forestry employees offers food drive thanks

The local Oregon Department of Forestry, which provides wildfire protection to Hood River County, would like to thank Smokehouse Products of Hood River and Maryhill Winery for their

generous support of the Governor's State Employees Food Drive.

“Through donations from local business such as these, the Oregon Department of Forestry was able to raise ap-

proximately 224,960 pounds of food statewide during the February 2015 Food Drive,” writes ODF's Deborah Gonzalez. “ODF appreciates local support in our efforts to stop hunger in Oregon.”

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