

Belinda Ballah guides Prevention Department

By **BARB AYERS**
For the Hood River News

Belinda Ballah, the County's new Prevention Department Director, brings a fresh perspective and longtime community experience, to helping Hood River kids grow up healthy.

Ballah was recently named the new Director of Hood River County Prevention Department, but she is not new to drug/alcohol/tobacco prevention, youth services or Hood River County. Her career in reaching youth includes work as the County's Drug/Tobacco Certified Prevention Specialist, 13 years at Hood River Middle School as a special education Instructional Assistant and coach for kids with behavioral challenges, and extensive youth outreach for Hood River Alliance Church.

The Prevention Department team, including Ballah, is committed to helping people. Ballah's career focus has been on reaching kids to help them make healthy choices, mobilizing local youth's unique perspectives and creativity, helping families overcome personal or traumatic challenges and helping our community reach its full, healthy potential. With longtime volunteer service to TIP, now known as crisis response team, she may be called in to our local hospital, homes or agencies to serve as a family resource in a time of tragedy.

"Our whole community is very health focused. Our department's focus is on helping kids grow up and thrive in our healthy Gorge environment. While we can't protect kids from everything, we can work together as a community to help them flourish," Ballah



Submitted photo

BELINDA BALLAH shows one product of a Health Media Club marijuana abuse prevention campaign. Ballah and others work with middle school and high school students on public education outreach promoting healthy lifestyles.

said. Youth are at the core of the Prevention Department's mission, specifically helping kids navigate a complex world of conflicting lifestyle choices. Ballah worked with longtime leaders Joella Dethman and Maija Yasui, who both recently retired from the Hood River County Commission on Children and Families, now known as the Hood River County Prevention Department. Now, Ballah leads the charge, as her department helps kids make wise choices by avoiding drugs, tobacco, and alcohol, and carrying this prevention message to their peers and community.

Kids' passion for this subject is evident in the football-stadium-size murals completed in 2013 at Wy'East

Middle School, featuring school eagle mascot Tuffy, soaring over Mount Hood, reminding us that "Soaring Above the Influence" is cool. Wy'East kids worked with the Prevention Department and a local professional artist to design two spectacular bilingual drug, smoke, alcohol and weapon prevention murals. The Wy'East "Soaring Above the Influence" video can be viewed on YouTube at Wy'East_Soaring.

Teens in HEALTH (Help, Educate, Advocate, Lead Towards Health) Media Clubs at HRV High School, Wy'East and Hood River Middle Schools design ad campaigns that encourage a tobacco and drug-free lifestyle. Their handiwork (and their smiles) are featured on movie theater trailers and newspaper articles.

For this 4th of July, teens designed stickers and plastered them on 3500 cases of beer sold at local retail stores, reminding adults not to drink and drive or provide alcohol to minors.

Kids are part of the solution in Prevention, but so is coalition building - working together, from a whole community perspective. One of the Prevention Department's coalitions brings together partner agencies, parents, and interested community members, including business leaders in Odell to reach families of migrant farm workers and help educate local Hispanic kids and families.

Local Hood River faces are stars on the State's www.SmokeFreeOregon.com website, speaking from a variety of viewpoints - store owner, HRV teens, Parks Department, County officials and Hispanic community members - these locals are now State spokespersons for bringing communities together for the common good.

Hood River County develops policies to help improve community outcomes. The community norm for allowing smoking is changing as more and more businesses and agencies move toward becoming tobacco, smoke and vape free.

One of the major focuses for the department this fall will be addressing how the new marijuana laws will impact youth and public safety. Ballah, like County public safety officials, wants to help protect youth from a potential new underage drug problem, as the availability of marijuana rises. At the same time, it will be important to counteract the public perception that the harm marijuana inflicts on kids lowers with loosened laws. Experts are concerned that the legalization of marijuana for adults will increase kids' access to, and use of, marijuana, although it remains illegal for people under age 21.

In her personal time, Ballah also focuses on youth and family - her husband, kids and grandkids, all Gorge residents. She also enjoys horseback riding.

Hood River News wins ONPA awards

Hood River News advertising staff repeated in Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association Better Ad ideas awards in judging for 2014, and the news department brought home four prizes including a first place for Best Business and Economic Reporting.

Hood River competes against other multi-issue weeklies throughout the state. Awards were presented last week at the annual convention for newspapers in Oregon.

In the Best Ad Idea Contest, Hood River News took first place among non-dailies for best overall advertising (non-dailies). This is the consecutive second year Hood River News has earned the top advertising award for non-dailies.

The News also took first and second places in best section cover for the Gorge Giving section, and Panorama section, respectively.

The News also took third in best advertising headline (GPSI) and second for best institutional/image ad (Northwest Pediatrics)

Trisha Walker earned a second place for her June 2014 article on Community Supported Agriculture enterprises (CSAs), called "Grown Local". Ben Mitchell, Kirby Neumann-Rea, and Trisha Walker took second in Lifestyle coverage for the August Kaleidoscope, "The prolific, delicious



blackberry". Editor Kirby Neumann-Rea and photographer Adam Lapierre took first in Best Economic and Business coverage for their November 2014 Kaleidoscope article on urban logging. (Lapierre now works for Slingshot.)

Lila May's party on Friday receives lots more help

The July 31 prom-birthday party for Lila May Schow, who is about to turn 5, is getting bigger.

The party may well be the last one for this feisty strawberry blond ember of a girl who has battled neuroblastoma cancer for more than three years. The party will be in the Butler Bank Building, 301 Oak St., starting at 6 p.m.

The Halls are planning a party that will be part birthday, part prom, part Cinderella ball, part wedding day. Kids must be present with a parent. Lila will arrive in a horse and carriage and walk down a red carpet.

"It will be an event not to miss with food, games, real princesses, music, dancing, photo booths and more," said family friend Jenny Lorenzen, who is organizing the party.

Third Street (between State

and Oak) will be closed off for food, games, and more.

People are welcome to bring gifts, although gift cards are a highly recommended idea. A donation jar will be available as well. Parking will be available at Hood River News, located three blocks away at 6th and State streets.

Union Event Co. is donating the space and organization. Other sponsors are: Melika; Juanita's Fine Foods, with chips and ingredients for at least a few hundred people; Veronica's Salsa, salsa for a few hundred people; Safeway, lemonade, 500 bottles of water, an cider; Rosauers, balloons, food trays, and more; Best Defense, \$200; Hawks Ridge, sponsoring all costs of the drawbridge; A Kidz Dental Zone : \$500 plus manning the Ice cream booth.



Photo by Kirby Neumann-Rea

PREVENTION PARTNERS, including Dulce Cavender, a long-time Health Media Club volunteer, received thanks last month from Ballah and the rest of the Prevention Department.

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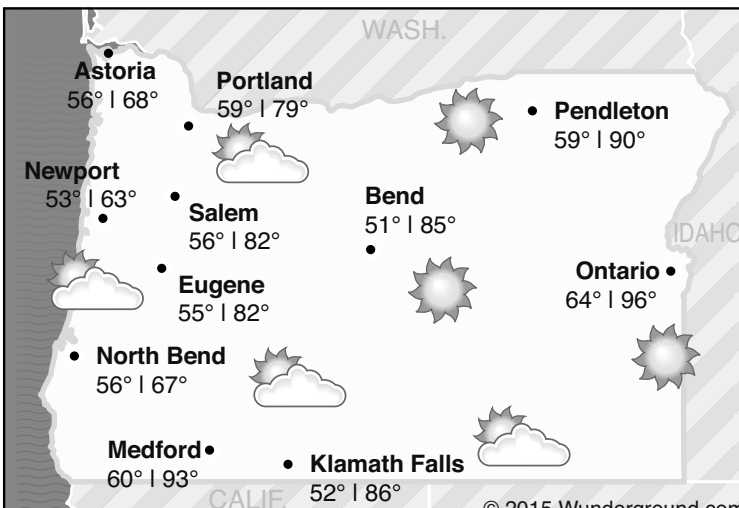
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Puzzle on Page A3

Hood River Weather Forecast

Date	Forecast	Daytime / Overnight High / Low (°F)
Today July 22	Partly Cloudy	78° / 59°
Thurs. July 23	Sunny	82° / 60°
Fri. July 24	Sunny	87° / 63°
Sat. July 25	Sunny	83° / 61°
Sun. July 26	Sunny	83° / 58°
Mon. July 27	Sunny	86° / 59°
Tues. July 28	Sunny	91° / 65°

Oregon Weather Map



This week's Forecast
Mostly sunny, with a high near 76. West wind 8 to 11 mph.

Humidity 59%
Wind Speed WNW 9 G 24 MPH
Barometer NA
Dewpoint 54°F (12°C)
Visibility NA
Last update 20 Jul 7:00 am PDT

Actual High / Low
AGRIMET HOOD RIVER OR
Lat: 45.6842 Long: -121.5181 Elev: 510
http://uspest.org

July 13	-	82/62
July 14	-	84/57
July 15	-	82/63
July 16	-	78/62
July 17	-	90/52
July 18	-	97/54
July 19	-	94/58

Updated Monday, July 20 at 9:00 a.m. PST
Data from www.weather.com

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