

CROWDFUNDING: Ki’iis likely won’t need more surgeries

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trips back and forth to Legacy Emanuel hospital in Portland for doctor’s appointments, as well as food and lodging for the family while Ki’iis had surgery and spend several days recovering at the hospital in June, have added up.

When Barkley began to worry about the expenses, she said her cousin suggested making an account on Gofundme.com, a website which allows people to donate. Within a few days Barkley said she and Tuala had raised enough money for their initial \$500 goal. To date, 13 people have donated \$1,150.

Tuala said he teared up when he saw people pitching in to help his family in their time of need.

“We didn’t expect that much support,” he said.

Barkley said the couple wanted to express their gratitude to everyone who helped, whether in person or online, and if more donations come in they will be used for follow-up appointments at Legacy Emanuel.

Meanwhile, three-month-old Ki’iis is living up to his name, flashing frequent smiles despite the scar that runs over the top of his head from ear to ear. He no longer sports the bulging forehead and pointed head that tipped his pediatrician off that something was wrong. And if all goes well he won’t need any more surgeries.

Noel Shannon

When a truck accident on a mountain road left Noel Shannon of Milton-Freewater with an amputated leg one year ago, her cousin set up an account on Gofundme.com to raise money for Shannon’s medical expenses.

The campaign ended up raising more than \$9,000 from family, friends and strangers who wrote messages telling Shannon they were impressed by the news accounts that detailed the way she spent all night digging through stone with a set of keys to free her



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Noel Shannon gets around with the use of a walker on her first day back home from the hospital in July 2014, in Milton-Freewater, after returning from Seattle where she was receiving medical treatment after having her leg amputated after a truck accident.

trapped leg.

“Some people could only afford \$5 and it touched my heart so much that they were willing to come together,” Shannon said, noting many people did so anonymously. “I wish I knew who everyone was so I could personally thank them.”

Shannon recently started working again after a year of recovery and relearning how to walk and drive using a prosthetic leg.

“I still have phantom pains but they’re not too bad,” she said. “It’s definitely nice to get back to a normal living situation.”

She has needed every penny of the money raised through Gofundme, because she is still battling her insurance company over payment for her ride on Lifeflight and all of the procedures and other expenses that happened afterward at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, which is out of Shannon’s network.

“I really had no choice,” Shannon said. “I couldn’t stay at St. Mary’s (in Walla Walla) because they didn’t have the expertise to handle my situation.”

David Abercrombie

Sometimes people use Gofundme to help their own families, but often friends step up and raise money in someone’s behalf. When David Abercrombie of Irrigon was killed by a truck he was repairing, family friend Traci Tromble stepped up to create an account to help the family with cremation expenses.

Tromble said starting a campaign on Gofundme was easy to do, but when she started the account she didn’t realize that the website keeps about 8 percent of the profits raised.

“I would have probably done it a different way,” she said.

The campaign has raised \$350 before processing fees so far, but Tromble said every little bit will help the family, which doesn’t have life insurance to help soften the blow.

Pendleton Sister City Exchange

Not every crowdfunding project has to involve a tragedy or a medical emergency. Eastern Oregon residents have also used the method to fund money for camps, school trips

and projects like the Rivoli Theater restoration.

Roberta Lavadour oversaw a campaign recently to raise about \$1,000 on Gofundme for Pendleton’s sister city exchange program. She emailed while on the trip to Minamisoma, Japan to say the crowdfunding website was a helpful companion to local efforts like car washes and bake sales.

She said creating a video and a Gofundme page for the trip was an easy thing for people to share on social media, which generated attention for the trip and the other fundraisers the group had going.

She isn’t sure if she will go the same route for her next campaign, though.

“It would depend on the project,” she said. “It would need to be a well-thought out project with a compelling need targeted to people who already want to contribute to the cause and just need a convenient vehicle to get the money to you.”

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EMERGENCY: Tax would allow for six more firefighters

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the department is stretched thin. With equipment costs, including \$500,000 within the next couple years to replace a fire engine, he said the department cannot afford to hire more personnel.

“Generally speaking, we’re going to continue to see some of those (delays), and it’s going to continue to get worse if we don’t get a chance to add more people,” he said. “At some point, we’ve got to have enough (funding) to hire a few more people and be able to replace equipment on time.”

Although an effort to consolidate the Hermiston and Stanfield fire districts and establish a new tax rate failed in November, Stanton said he believes the endeavor is necessary to provide revenue so emergency services can continue to be operate without substantial delays.

He said, after receiving feedback from residents, a new effort with a lower tax

rate is being planned for the May 2016 ballot. Instead of the \$2 tax rate per \$1,000 of assessed property value, he said the new proposed rate will be \$1.75.

“That would allow us to hire six more firefighters and have enough money in our capital reserve to buy the expensive engine at \$500,000,” he said. “Right now, it would not be possible to do that without going into debt.”

With six new full-time employees, Stanton said the department would be able to staff at least seven employees at all times, and the 40 percent increase would reduce the likelihood of delays.

Stanton said he hoped the lower tax rate and an increased focus on educating voters about the consolidation would help the measure pass the second time around. He said anyone with questions about the department or the consolidation effort should contact the department, 541-567-8822 or hermistonfire.com.

LABOR: Rural millworkers may not be able to find new jobs

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positive signs: Employers added a collective 2,300 new jobs in June, for a cumulative 52,100 in the past year. Many of the jobs gained last month were concentrated in the public sector and retail, but most industries have grown in the past year.

More people also started looking for work. The injection of new jobseekers into Oregon’s labor market drove up the unemployment rate from 5.3 percent in May to 5.5 percent in June.

That bucked the national trend. The U.S. unemployment rate actually decreased from 5.5 percent to 5.3 percent.

But Oregon’s labor force participation decline is in line with the national trend, driven in large part by an aging workforce, said Tom Potiowsky, an economist who leads the Northwest Economic Research Center at Portland State University.

It’s not, he said, because “20-something-year-olds are retiring.”

As baby boomers get older, state researchers expect the participation rate to fall even farther, to 59.5 percent by 2022, based on national projections and

state demographics, said Nick Beleickis, a labor economist at the state.

He said many of the economic forces that drove people out of the labor market amid the recession have diminished. Employment growth is steady and the unemployment rate is where it was before the downturn, he said.

McMullen, though, believes there may still be some people stuck on the sidelines. He’s concerned that won’t be cyclical, but structural.

Rural millworkers, for example, may not be able to find new jobs within their communities and be forced out of the workforce altogether.

“A skills mismatch — that’s what we’re really worried about,” he said.

Employers say they are increasingly having trouble filling jobs.

Though businesses posted more job openings this spring than any other since the recession. But managers said they had a tough time filling 61 percent of the vacancies because too few people applied. Businesses may need to step up their starting wages to attract the workers they want.

LOTTERY: Myren is the 246th Megabucks millionaire

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employee training.

“If you look at this I-84 freeway, we’re competing against some major players,” Devin said. “As an owner, we have to invest in our store and make it better.”

Devin said it is the first time the store has sold a multi-million dollar lotto ticket, and he was happy to see the jackpot won by someone in Morrow County.

Myren admits the lottery was his own “stupid little thing,” but he did set a few rules for himself: He would only play Oregon Lottery games, and only when the pot was \$5 million or more.

Even then, Mim said she got a little annoyed with her husband. The odds just seemed too long to realistically cash in on a big winner.

That didn’t stop Myren from buying a pair of \$1 Oregon’s Game Megabucks tickets in Boardman on June 7, with the odds of winning the top prize at one in 6.1 million. A drawing was held the next day, though Myren would wait three days before returning to check his numbers, unaware he had a \$5.5 million piece of paper in his pocket.

When he finally stopped in at the Heppner Shell station to see if he won, it took a moment for the clerk to piece together what had happened.

“That’s when she started jumping up and down and screaming,” Myren said.

Myren called his financial advisor first, then called Mim. The couple would have to wait until the next day to claim their prize at the Lottery offices in Salem. They barely slept a wink that night.

“I was speechless,” Mim said. “It was unbelievable.”

Congressional panels will investigate Planned Parenthood video

WASHINGTON (AP) — The searing political conflict over abortion flared anew Wednesday as three Republican-led congressional committees said they will investigate whether Planned Parenthood is selling organs from aborted fetuses.

House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, criticized the group and said President Barack Obama should condemn and end the practice. Other GOP lawmakers and 2016 presidential hopefuls joined in, including some who said Congress should end federal aid to the organization.

The GOP offensive came a day after an anti-abortion group circulated a video it made secretly showing a Planned Parenthood official discussing the disposal of body parts from aborted fetuses.

Planned Parenthood, which provides abortions and other reproductive health services, says it legally helps women who want to make not-for-profit donations of their fetus’ organs for scientific research. It says it makes no money by donating the organs to science, and says the video was heavily edited.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Devin Oil Co. owner Doug Devin, Oregon Lottery winner specialist Patrick Johnson, and Megabucks winner Steve Myren pose for a photo with a ceremonial check that was presented to Boardman Chevron on Tuesday in Boardman.

They arrived in Salem 10 minutes before the office opened at 8 a.m. Lottery officials confirmed the winning ticket and Myren said they burst into tears. He immediately bought a new Dodge pickup truck, and the rest of the money is in an investment account until they can figure out what to do with it.

Myren elected to take the money in annual payouts over 25 years as opposed to one lump sum. After taxes, that’s approximately \$130,000 per year.

For now, Myren said the plan is to continue working with the Morrow County Sheriff’s Office until his retirement in two years. However, he added he doesn’t know what the future will hold.

“This is just going to make retirement more comfortable,” Myren said.

Boardman is a town of about 3,220 people, the kind of place where everyone knows everyone — especially the local undersheriff. Most feedback from the community has been positive, Myren said. Every once in a while, he’ll hear a few tongue-in-cheek cries of “Dad!” or “Uncle Steve!” from friends and neighbors.

Myren is the 246th Megabucks millionaire, a fact he said has taken time to truly sink in.

“You don’t really think it’s going to happen until it does,” he said.

Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.

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