

EOTEC: ‘Our goal is not to lose any events’

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In addition to business manager Heather Cannell’s salary, personnel costs will include a full-time administrative assistant, two part-time janitorial staff and a part-time finance position split with the city.

On the construction side, bills will be paid out of a beginning cash balance of \$4.6 million, as well as a \$1.4 million state grant administrated by the Port of Umatilla, \$1 million raised through an increase in the tourism promotion assessment and donations from the community. The money will go toward constructing barns, a rodeo arena, food stalls, restrooms and finishing touches such as fences and lighting.

Before the budget committee meeting met on Friday morning, the EOTEC board approved a marketing grant application process. For large events held at EOTEC, the event organizers can apply for reimbursement of marketing costs at a rate of \$5 per hotel room filled by event-goers, up to \$5,000. More than \$5,000 can be approved by a vote of six of the seven EOTEC board members.

“Our goal is not to lose any events,” board member Vijay Patel said.

Rob Drier of Frew Development gave the board its monthly construction update, noting that 13 people attended a pre-bid meeting for construction of the barns. Bids are due June 16 and the board is expected to award

the contract during its June 24 meeting.

Design work for the rodeo arena continues and soil samples are being analyzed to determine where dirt needs to be shipped from to create the right composition for a rodeo arena. Drier said the plan is to put the project out to bid on June 16.

“Each person is working to meet the deadline,” Drier said.

On Friday the EOTEC board agreed to pay \$2,600 for materials if Umatilla County provided the labor to lay dust suppression materials on Ott Road near EOTEC. Commissioner Larry Givens said he felt strongly that it was a matter of being a good neighbor. Business manager Heather Cannell said she has

taken several phone calls from neighbors who say the amount of dust they are breathing in from the unpaved road has increased exponentially thanks to contractors using the road to access the construction site. Hermiston police were contacted about the problem.

“It’s definitely an issue,” she said. “Is it our responsibility? I don’t know, but we do get a lot of complaints.”

After the board approved the budget item for materials, Givens said the county could put down the suppres-sant later in the week. The county is currently looking at funding options from the state to pave Ott Road.

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TRAUMA: Process takes six to eight months on average

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A classmate did a handstand on the rug nearby. Staff members circulated among the seven girls and 17 boys, getting a reading on where each stood emotionally.

The smell of breakfast wafted from the kitchen. The cook, Piper Carstens, stood by the stove, efficiently tending a pan of sizzling bacon, listening to The Beatles sing about Old Flattop with his “joo joo eyeballs” and “hair down to his knee.” Soon, the children shoveled in bacon, eggs and toast with gusto.

Teacher CJ Brunette bantered easily with her group, gently encouraging them to slow down.

“Sometimes they haven’t had enough to eat,” Brunette said later. “They eat too fast and ask for more.”

Some arrive without yet having learned table manners, but that’s the least of it. They have often been ejected from their regular classrooms for a history of unruly behavior

The five-year-old program’s four teachers/teaching assistants are employees of the Inter-Mountain Education Service District. The five life skills trainers are employed by Lifeways. The program is funded by Greater Oregon Behavioral Health, Inc./ Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization.

The teams work in tandem toward the ultimate goal — healing for the children.

“The focus of day treatment is helping kids overcome trauma they’ve experienced in their lives,” said Assistant Lifeways Director Regina Eilertson. “Education is a part of what they do here, but the focus is really on healing so they can return to the school environment and be successful there.”

It’s difficult. Children who have endured prolonged trauma spend more time in survival mode. Their limbic systems (where emotion is processed) and prefrontal cortex (where reasoning happens) lag behind in development.

“Their brains aren’t fully developed to where they can sit down and have a rational conversation with you about better decisions they should be making,” Eilertson said.

Coping behaviors depend on the child. Some cry, scream and have tantrums. Others freeze or act aggressively toward their peers, talk incessantly in class or refuse to do schoolwork. In regular school, there are lots of suspensions and expulsions.

“Their behavior can seem logical to them,” said Day Treatment Coordinator Haley Kannard. “It’s what they’ve learned to do in their environment.”

Once a child arrives at day treatment, the staff eases them out of survival mode by helping them feel safe and connected with people who care about them. Counselors help them name their feelings using tools such as cuddly “Feeling Buddies,” each wearing a distinctly different facial expression. The child selects the Buddy that best matches their own emotion. Gradually, they understand they have nothing to fear at the center.

“Once they feel connected and safe, they can access the

thinking part of their brains,” Eilertson said.

Absorbing skills and strategies to survive in regular school takes an average of six to eight months. Parents must agree to participate in parenting sessions and counseling, too. Otherwise, the job would be much like Sisyphus, of Greek mythology, who pushed a huge boulder up a mountain only to watch it roll back down — over and over for eternity. Even with parental involvement, kids often arrive at the school in survival mode after a rough night at home.

“It may take all day to get them back into the executive thinking state,” Kannard said.

On this day, the kids finished breakfast, picked up hygiene kits containing toothbrush, toothpaste and deodorant and got in line for the bathroom. When an argument erupted, a counselor calmly helped them resolve the conflict.

“We start teaching skills the moment they walk through the front door,” said Crystal Ross, a skills trainer.

After hygiene time, the older children (grades three through eight) gathered on one side of the building. Younger students (kindergarten through second) went to the other. The younger group started by singing a good morning song.

“This is how our day begins,” they sang. “Hello, Jello. Hi there, grizzly bear. How are you, caribou?” It continues in that vein for a minute or two and ends with “Good morning, good friends.”

The kids seemed upbeat, but a couple minutes later, one suddenly lashed out another.

“Shut the fricking hell up,” she said, holding up her middle finger at another child.

Such outbursts provide plenty of clues about the children’s turbulent home lives. Sometimes the staff ignores the profanity and sometimes not. Skills trainer Rex Holcomb, who some of his colleagues call a “kid whisperer,” said such displays are often ignored.

“For some kids, ignoring their behavior is the best way to handle it — if they don’t get a reaction, they stop,” Holcomb said. “With others, you can reason with them.”

At day treatment, discipline is meted out with love; it’s never punitive.

“Being punitive with this population — that doesn’t work at all,” Brunette said. “It just traumatizes them.”

The children divided into three small groups. In a tiny classroom, Brunette guided a conversation about land-forms such as lakes, oceans, mountains and plains. On the wall, she had posted the class rules: Respect yourself. Respect others. Respect things. The conversation about oceans took a detour to

a short exploration of sharks. When one student loudly passed gas, Brunette calmly reminded the child to say, “Excuse me.” They moved on.

Just outside Brunette’s room, four boys and a girl sat in a circle on the rug playing a card game called UNO. One boy chided another for sitting too close.

“You popped my bubble,” he told the boy, angrily.

“A lot of the kids have issues with personal space,” Holcomb said. “We explain that everyone has a bubble. You don’t get in each other’s bubble.”

The offender scooted back and gave his classmate more room. Play resumed.

At a round table nearby sat skills trainer Terry Corwin, a big guy with a long, red beard and a tat sleeve. He and a little girl played a card game called emotion matching, a variation of the game Memory or Concentration. When she got her first pair, they mashed their fingers together and gave each other high fives. The counselor wrested the girl’s attention back to the game when she started blowing bubbles in a glass of water. Both looked over when an argument erupted at the UNO game as one boy accused another of cheating. The other leaned anxiously over his cards.

“It’s my turn,” said the accuser. “We skipped three places.”

Ross spoke up calmly.

“Let’s all take a deep breath,” she said. “Can you tell everyone how that made you feel?” she asked the boy. Later, she queried, “Should we continue playing?”

Yes, they said. “So if we continue playing, how will we solve this problem?”

Suggestions came. Play resumed. Conversation skipped from “Pirates of the Caribbean” to the scab on one boy’s knee. The game halted again when one player threw his cards onto the carpet in frustration, exclaiming “I’m not going to win.” Through it all, Ross remained amazingly unruffled using a technique called “conscious discipline,” where children learn to self-regulate, calmly, without drama.

Holcomb said the children respond to the love, calmness and boundaries. A psychiatrist spends one day a week at the center to monitor and counsel the children. The kids soak it in.

“They want to be here,” Holcomb said. “They want to get better.”

What works for one child, though, may not work for another. Therapy comes in many guises. On this day, a knot of children did chalk art in the parking lot with Bonnie Mayfield from the Pendleton Center for the Arts. Others learned to change a bike tire. Another group strolled on the Pendleton Riverwalk watching goats and a blue heron.

“Every kid is different,” Holcomb said. “We can’t cookie cutter anything. We adapt what we’re doing on a daily basis.”

“We go at the child’s pace,” Eilertson said. “When they move, we move with them. It’s amazing to see the difference you make in the life of a child just by caring about them.”

The process takes six to eight months on average, but can last a year. Eventually, the children find their way. They are eased back into the school system armed with tools and strategies and an army of supporters in the wings. The transition often takes place over weeks, maybe starting with an hour a day or two half days a week. It depends on the kid, said skills trainer Bailey Mayfield, who accompanies many of the children back to school.

“It’s overwhelming at first,” he said. “All of a sudden, they’re in class with 30 kids.”

Day Treatment operates all year long and even during spring break and Christmas vacation. The work is intense. By day’s end, the team is tired.

“It’s never boring, but we are wiped out by the end of the day,” Brunette said, “but we know we’re doing something positive. It’s the kids who keep you going.”

Most try to forget about the children during off hours.

“It’s heartbreaking. You have to go home and turn it off,” said teaching assistant Lindsay Mitchell. “Otherwise, you’ll quickly burn out.”

Holcomb stood watching kids doing chalk art on the pavement outside the main door.

“You would go nuts if you took everything home with you,” he said. “The stuff that’s happened to them — I wouldn’t wish it on anybody.”

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BALDO: One of her favorite parts of the job is buying books

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from the Army to follow her to Hermiston, so she made the decision to retire too.

She saw an opening for a librarian in Umatilla and decided to dust off her library sciences degree. The job may not have been as exciting, she said, but it also didn’t keep her up at night worrying that a mistake under her watch would cause mass casualties.

“Special weapons, nuclear and chemical, it’s a real tightrope, a zero-mis-take environment,” she said. “Going from that to putting on antlers and doing a story time was a relief.”

She had to get used to the way libraries had changed since she left school — the absence of a physical card catalog was a shock after spending so many hours in school learning how to properly type up cards. But she said many functions of her job, such as managing employees and writing up reports, are not much different than what she did in the Army.

Libraries are becoming wall-less, she said. People used to be limited to the books on the shelves of their libraries. Now they can jump online and request an inter-library loan from across the state, download an e-book, listen to an audiobook or use a subscrip-tion-based database.

“I can’t tell you what it’s going to look like in the future,” she said.

One of Baldo’s favorite parts of the job, however, is still buying books.

“I love zombie books,” she said. “We probably have a higher percentage of zombie books than at other libraries.”

Another favorite experience has been working with the teen advisory council. Baldo said when

she came to the library the young adult section was small and mostly held classics like Tom Sawyer. She put together a group of teenagers, won a grant and took them to Barnes and Noble in Kennewick to pick out \$1,000 worth of young adult books for the library and then discuss them over lunch. The “mall crawl” has since become a beloved annual tradition.

“They found ‘The Hunger Games,’” she said. “They’ve found good books, and our circulation jumped tremendously.”

She said she already had a large amount of respect for the staff when she arrived, because she had served on the Hermiston City Council and knew how hard they worked. She has enjoyed working with them and collaborating with other librarians.

“I know librarians from Ontario to Hood River, and they have become my friends,” she said.

One thing she hasn’t enjoyed as much is dealing with the facilities side, including several major repairs and remodeling the library to get rid of a former decorating scheme she described as “violently pink.”

Now she is leaving it all behind for retirement on June 30. Baldo said her pre-retirement present for herself was going through the qualifying process for the TSA pre-check program. She and her husband already have two trips planned (to the beach and an Alaskan cruise) and hope to take many more. Her third dream as a teenager, after the Army and library, was to travel.

“Talk about a lucky life,” she said.

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GUNS: Ruling could be challenged

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efforts that Democrats have vowed to raise again during the 2017 Legislative session.

Democratic Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum and her staff were still reviewing the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling and weren’t ready to comment, according to spokeswoman Kristina Edmunson.

Rep. Sal Esquivel, a Republican and staunch gun rights advocate, said it punishes the law-abiding majority for the mistakes of a few.

“It’s thoroughly disgusting to me the judicial system is attacking the Second Amendment like they are, trying to chip away at it. It’s beneath contempt,” Esquivel said.

Kevin Starrett, executive director of the Oregon Firearms Federation, said

he wouldn’t be surprised if Thursday’s ruling will embolden some of the Oregon Statehouse’s “anti-gun legislators to start trying to restrict the concealed handgun licenses, which they have done in the past.”

But Sen. Ginny Burdick, the chamber’s Democratic majority leader and a strong gun control advocate, said that’s unlikely. But she thinks current concealed-carry laws could be tougher, such as tightening license application’s “ridiculously small training requirement,” Burdick said.

The ruling ultimately could be challenged in the U.S. Supreme Court. It was consistent with rulings since 2012 in three other circuits upholding similar restrictions in New York, Maryland and New Jersey. However, the high court did not take up the issue after those rulings.

22nd ANNIVERSARY!



ALL WHEELS WEEKEND

JUNE 17, 18 & 19, 2016

SCHEDULE OF MAJOR EVENTS

FRIDAY, JUNE 17
EARLY CAR REGISTRATION Corner of 1st and Main St.
OPENING CEREMONY HomeStreet Bank
PRESENTATION OF CARS HomeStreet Bank
LIVE BAND: CRUISE CONTROL 2nd and Main St, 6 - 9
CAR CORRAL AND SWAP MEET Seneca Parking lot, 12 - 7 pm

SATURDAY, JUNE 18
CAR CORRAL AND SWAP MEET Seneca parking lot, 9 am - 4 pm
KIDS WORLD AND CRACK THE SAFE AT HISTORIC DEPOT
POKER WALK by Dingle’s Hardware, corner of 1st and Main St.
DEMO DERBY by State Farm Insurance.

SUNDAY, JUNE 19
FATHER’S DAY BREAKFAST Youth Building at the Fairgrounds 8-11am
GOLF TOURNAMENT by Chief Springs at Touchet Valley Golf Course at 9am. Putt your way to \$10K

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