

PETITION: 'This program literally saved my life'

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increased public safety and reducing public cost by decreasing drug related crimes and breaking the cycle of addiction."

Michelle DeBord, who spent three years in drug court before graduating from the program in September 2016, said the program changed her life.

"There's somebody always there to say, 'You can do this,'" DeBord said. "It's a team that helps you get from one step to the next."

DeBord, 39, was addicted to heroin following the death of her husband when she entered drug court. She had previously cycled through 13 other inpatient centers, and her two oldest children were adopted out to her parents.

Since then, she has two years clean and will graduate from college later this year.

"This program literally saved my life," she told Rep. Smith during Monday's meeting, which also included three drug and alcohol rehab counselors who previously worked with drug court. "I, today, am living a very productive and beautiful life."

Smith, who serves as vice co-chair of the Joint Ways and Means Committee in Salem, said he has close personal friendships with three constituents who completed drug court. The program is vital for many Oregonians, he added, and budget woes have forced Umatilla County into an awkward position.

Smith emphasized that money will be spent one way or another on drug and alcohol offenders — the

question is whether that will come in the form of programs like drug court, or sentencing more people to prison.

"Community corrections and drug court need to be a priority for us," Smith said. "Let me do everything I can to advocate for this work."

Drug court advocates will hold a similar meeting Thursday with Sen. Bill Hansell (R-Athena). At the local level, DeBord said she plans to set up a booth during Pendleton's Earth Day March for Science on April 22, where she will have copies of their petition available. The petition can also be found at www.change.org.

Meanwhile, LPSCC will hold its next meeting Tuesday, April 11 at noon in room 114 of the Umatilla County Courthouse.

Immediately following the meeting, McHenry said the council's Justice Reinvestment Subcommittee will be discussing next steps for current drug court clients, including other options for services.

"We're definitely trying to do the very best we can for those clients," McHenry said.

DeBord said she is trying to get as many people affected by drug court as possible to attend that meeting. The key, she said, is putting a human face to the program.

"I think the humanity piece is the most important part of this," DeBord said. "I need to share that wisdom. I need to get that story out there."

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Sen. Kathleen Taylor, chairwoman of the Workforce Committee, and Legislative Analyst Debra Maryanov review paperwork before a hearing on predictive scheduling Monday at the Oregon Capitol in Salem.

SCHEDULE: Employers often schedule employees with less than 24 hours' notice

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the change but are still concerned about meeting the requirements, especially in industries dependent on weather or deliveries such as construction or nurseries.

Employers said they're also concerned with a provision that would give employees the right to request a schedule change and make retaliation against the employee an unlawful employment practice.

The language in the bill could open businesses up to frivolous lawsuits when bosses deny such requests, said Betsy Earls, a lobbyist for Associated Oregon Industries and the Oregon Retail Council.

Lobbyists with public employers urged lawmakers to give an exemption for collective bargaining agreements, as the City of Seattle did in its similar ordinance, because the agreements spell out the process for schedule changes and could conflict with the law.

The requirements would apply only to retail, hospitality and food services establishments with 25 or more employees in Oregon.

If passed, the so-called "predictive scheduling" legislation would be the first statewide law of its kind in the nation. Only local jurisdictions, such as San Francisco and Seattle, have passed comparable policies. Similar legislation stalled in the Oregon Legislature in 2015.

Not all employers oppose the bill. A representative from the New Seasons grocery chain spoke in support of the proposed regulations.

"We know from firsthand

experience that when workers have fair and predictable scheduling, families thrive and businesses succeed," said Sarah Joannides, social responsibility director at New Seasons. Joannides said many customers shop at the chain because of the way the company treats its employees.

Several employees in the service industry also spoke about how they have struggled when they haven't been able to know their schedule in advance. One man said he was given 15 minutes' notice that he would be required to work a double shift.

Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland, sponsored this year's legislation after convening a work group on predictive scheduling last year.

Several members from the business community boycotted the work group meetings because they said they felt attempts to regulate and tax businesses in Oregon have become increasingly overreaching and anti-business. At the time, they pointed to Ballot Measure 97, which sought to tax certain large corporations on sales. Voters defeated the measure overwhelmingly in November.

Surveys, however, show that employers often schedule employees with less than 24 hours' notice, Mary King, a labor economist and professor at Portland State University, testified in late February. King and two researchers from the University of Oregon completed a report on their research earlier this year. With such short notice, some employees cannot find child care, make doctor's appointments, work second jobs or attend school, she said.

BMCC: Two other facilities will open this fall

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Jerry McMichael readied the industrial system technology lab where classes will start Tuesday evening. He happily grinned at the machinery situated at the center of the large room. The equipment will allow students to study a variety of systems (pneumatic, electrical, pumps, motors and others) and become familiar with such things as rotameters, flow control, electromechanical relays, hydraulics, flow control and on and on. Students will come away with the ability to take care of a variety of industrial systems. Before this new building, instructors took special suitcases packed with equipment into classrooms at Riverside High School.

"It's nice to have a home," McMichael said.

Two other BMCC projects are also speeding full-tilt toward their finish lines. The college's new Precision Irrigated Agriculture Center is rising in Hermiston on Oregon State University Experiment Station property. The main building at the FARM (Facility for Agricultural Resource Management) on the Pendleton campus is getting a major makeover with the addition of second-story classrooms to allow a new veterinary assistant program. Both facilities will open this fall.

Construction proceeded despite a couple of frustrating challenges. Early on in Boardman, a waterline burst near Olsen Road and caused about one million gallons to flood the Workforce Training Center site. The deluge damaged footings and required the removal of rebar. Nasty stretches of winter weather hampered construction at all sites, but the fallout has been minor.

"We're a little behind because of the crazy winter weather," White-Zollman said. "But all things considered, despite Mother Nature's havoc, we're doing



The finishing touches are still being applied to BMCC's new Workforce Training Center as classes begin Monday in Boardman.



Construction continues on the FARM (Facility for Agricultural Resource Management) building Monday on the BMCC campus in Pendleton.

really well. By the end of this calendar year, all projects will be done."

She credits project manager Frew Development and general contractors McCormack Construction, in Boardman, and Wellens Farwell, in Hermiston and Pendleton.

The projects are on budget, too, she said. Despite a hike in the price of steel, "we do have some savings that are going back into bond contingency."

A bond oversight committee consisting of members from all around Umatilla and Morrow Counties meets quarterly to review progress.

Additional bond improvements include renovations to the front entryway at the Milton-Freewater Center and upgrades to heating and cooling, electrical and other systems on the Pendleton campus. The work means emptying out Morrow Hall for the summer.

Tammie Parker, BMCC's vice president of administrative services, deals with a lot of those logistics. She said the work will displace 75 staff members who will work in "every available nook and cranny on campus." The service center will set up shop in a module in the theater parking lot, for

example. The GED/college prep program will move to the art gallery.

This summer, the college will also improve emergency access to the campus, widening and partially paving a gravel road that stretches from Westgate, past the BMCC softball field to the main parking lot.

Parker tore away from planning talk to revel in the completion of the first bond project.

"The building turned out way beyond my expectations," she said. "It's a beautiful building with a lot of energy efficiencies."

White-Zollman took a moment for gratitude. As someone who presented bond information to a multitude of community groups across the two counties during two bond campaigns, she feels it deep.

"We are so appreciative that our community (in the wider sense) has allowed us the opportunity to construct these buildings and enhance our programs," she said. "It shows that our community values this college and values education. It's really a beautiful thing."

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DRIVING: Two bills are being proposed about distracted driving

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"We're making sure the reality of what can happen is in plain view for others," Moulton said.

The display is part of the Oregon Department of Transportation's Distracted Driving Awareness month. The display, which features a photo of Therwhanger and a timeline of her trip from Long Creek to the time of her accident, will be at Hermiston High School on Tuesday, and will then move to Salem, where it will sit on the steps of the Capitol.

Moulton will travel to Salem to talk to legislators about distracted driving laws. Two bills are being proposed for this session: House Bill 2597, which will ban the use of any mobile electronic devices while driving, and not just communication devices. It also proposes increasing the maximum fine for distracted driving from

\$500 to \$2,000, but first-time offenders may be able to waive the fee by taking a distracted driver education course. Senate Bill 2

proposes harsher convictions for distracted driving, including classifying it as a Class A Misdemeanor and increasing the maximum penalty for a first-time offender to \$6,250, up to a year in prison or both. Under the proposed bill, more than three convictions of distracted driving in 10 years could be classified as a felony.

The display will then be taken around the state and used for various purposes, including Driver's Education classes.

"This will be used to show students, 'This is what one minute of taking your eyes off the road can do,'" Moulton said.

Moulton said the most difficult part of the display is the visual reminder of her daughter's decision to use

her phone — and the price she, and those who love her, are paying.

"I know it's not politically correct," she said. "It breaks my heart, but this is 100 percent her fault. Her decision is what took her from everyone."

Most of the students who walked by the display at lunch didn't know Therwhanger, but looked at the car with disbelief.

"What happened to that car?" A freshman boy gasped as he walked by. He looked at the map showing Therwhanger's route. He shook his head. "I know exactly where that is," he said.

Most students who stopped by the display said they don't use their phones while driving to text — but many acknowledged they'll use it to play music.

John Hogan, a sophomore, spent several minutes looking at the display in silence.

"I was in a wreck too —

due to speeding," he said. On his way to Boardman last year, he hit a patch of ice while driving at a high speed.

He walked around the display and looked at the damaged car.

"My wreck wasn't that bad," he said with a rueful laugh. "I was lucky. It was a Subaru. It saved me pretty good."

Hogan, like many of the other students who stopped to look at the car, said he pulls over when he uses his phone, even to play music.

Moulton said for a lot of the students passing by, it's hard to take the display seriously — but she hopes it'll encourage them to think twice before taking out their phones while driving.

"There's not any text so important that this should be the end result," she said.

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