

# FORTRESS: 700 contacts have come in on tip line

Continued from 1A

it, also spurred school districts to seek bonds that were not only about upgrading old buildings.

"It's about, 'I've got this 1920s building, and I've got to secure the perimeter,'" he said.

Echo schools superintendent Raymon Smith said safety was one reason district voters passed an \$8 million school bond in his district of less than 250 students.

Anyone could enter unseen at the school before, he said, but the new entry, which is under construction, has a double set of doors into the front office where visitors have to pass through two more security measures before entering the school itself. Other improvements include better door locks and an electronic and camera surveillance system to monitor doors and spaces in real time.

Smith said schools take precautions every day to ensure safety, but student behaviors also present safety threats.

"The biggest problem most schools have is kids prop open doors," he said.

Students and staff at Pendleton High School call that "rocking the door." Pendleton High School principal Dan Greenough took to the intercom the day after a 19-year-old gunman in Florida killed 17 students and teachers to tell students and staff to follow safety policies, and he specifically wanted students to stop propping open doors.

Smith said what schools are trying to do is no different than when we lock our homes at night and turn on security systems — both are about protecting others.

"The top priority is to educate kids in an environment where they feel safe and secure," he said.

Larry Glaze is the ESD facilities director, and before that he was the La Grande schools superintendent, where voters approved a \$36 million bond for multiple improvements at schools, including buzz-in and video systems at the front doors



Fans file into the gymnasium to watch the Heppner girls team take on Kennedy in the first round of the state 2A basketball championships on Thursday in Pendleton.



Students walk past a poster for Oregon State Police's SafeOregon tip line in the halls of Pendleton High School.

to allow staff to screen who gets in.

Surveillance systems that allow staff and police to view school video in real time are valuable tools, he said, compared to the Florida school, which provided the video 20 minutes after the carnage. Such systems, however, are expensive.

"It's the kind of stuff you generally do if you pass a

bond," Glaze said. "When we worked that into the bond [in La Grande], it was a selling point to the community."

Local communities "are all over the map" on how secure they want their schools, he said, with the more rural schools even hesitant about locking side doors. But even small changes can make a school safer.

Numbering school doors and providing an up-to-date school map to police allows officers to coordinate actions inside a school, he said, and classroom doors locking from the inside rather than the outside means teachers don't have to stand in the hall and be a target.

"Back in the day, people didn't have to worry about this stuff," Glaze said. "But now you do."

### Who to call

Glaze also said the best safety feature is prevention, which is what SafeOregon addresses.

SafeOregon is the Oregon State Police school safety tipline that started in 2017 in Eastern Oregon schools. Jodi Sherwood is the project manager. She said Oregon students can use a phone app, website or phone number to make anonymous reports about situations or circumstances that make

them question safety.

So far, she said, more than 700 tips have come in.

"We've seen quite a few tips coming since the Florida incident," she said, and the students using the tip line are interested in helping other people.

Bullying and harassment are No. 1, with 136 reports since the start and 55 of those from Sept. 1 to Nov. 30, according to the most recent results. The tipline in that span also received nine threats of assault and 10 threats of safety.

Oregon has about 1,250 schools, and Sherwood said 830 are using the tip tools and another 200 soon will be.

"We're working on getting everyone signed up," she said.

Eight other states run school safety tip lines. Sherwood said Oregon and those states discuss their programs and try to learn

from each other to improve their systems.

Mulvihill said he knows if there is a shooter in Helix, for example, the state, counties and cities are committed to sending cops. Getting to that point meant 18 school districts had to adopt common terms. Police rushing from all over need to all know what a "lock out" means versus a "lock in," and so on.

That gets put to its first big test April 13 in Boardman in an emergency scenario involving student actors, first responders and local school officials coming to observe. Mulvihill said the exercise will have to deal with social media and try to mimic real-life situations, such as demanding parents pushing police for information. School staff will get to practice re-uniting students with parents and guardians after the event.

"That's where schools have really struggled," he said.

This kind of drill may have to become an annual event, he said, but testing the system and finding its holes is the only way to get to the next level in school safety. If a shooting happens at a school, he said, the question comes back to what could we have done to prevent it?

Along that line, Mulvihill said he thinks schools should be much more like fortresses than when he was a Pendleton grade school principal, but he stops short of buzzing every single person through the front door.

School is a microcosm of the community itself, Mulvihill said, and understanding that leads to bigger questions than gun laws or arming teachers. We need to talk about what we are going to do to make our kids healthy, he said.

"Until we look holistically," he said, "we will not find answers."

Contact Phil Wright at [pwright@eastoregonian.com](mailto:pwright@eastoregonian.com) or 541-966-0833.

# CAPITAL: EOU gets \$9 million for a new fieldhouse in La Grande

Continued from 1A

after the city of Hermiston notified them the parks and recreation department would be taking over operations of the Hermiston Conference Center (now being rebranded at the Hermiston Community Center) where the chamber had traditionally been located.

Josh Burns, chair of the chamber board, said the chamber was "very excited" to get the news about the funding for a new building and was grateful to Smith for putting in the request.

"This will benefit our members in a more visible and more suitable space for the chamber that has adequate meeting space as well as the room and the facilities and the technology for workforce development training," he said. "Personally I'm really excited about this because it will help us create even more value for our members and our city."

Burns said after the money is officially appropriated, the chamber's board will work on design and on finding property that will best fit the facility's purposes.

Since Umatilla County didn't get funding for the jail, Rowan will be taking a different path. He said when Sen. Bill Hansell called to personally deliver the news, he told Rowan not to give up.

"He had some very positive comments," Rowan said. "He said the committee felt very positive toward the project, and they recognized the need. He also advised me that some of the projects that did go through, this might be their third or fourth bite of the apple."

He said he planned to pursue different grants and other funding opportunities and if he didn't find another way he would be back next session. He said after going

to Salem last week to testify he learned a lot for next time. It was difficult to fit all of the information into his two-minute time slot, for example, and so next time he will bring multiple people to help testify.

Hansell and Rep. Greg Barreto of District 58 both showed up to the capital construction committee meeting where Rowan testified in order to express support for the project. Barreto said when he asked the speaker of the house Tina Kotek why the project ultimately did not make the list this session, he didn't get a concrete answer, but like Hansell he pointed to the fact that it often takes multiple tries to get a capital project funded by the legislature.

"I do think the jail next time around would have a good chance," Barreto said.

One project that did get funded in Barreto's district this session is \$9 million for a new fieldhouse at Eastern Oregon University in La Grande, as well as \$1.1 million for track and field renovations at the university. Students are currently using off-campus facilities for some practices, but when complete the new fieldhouse will provide indoor facilities for track and other outdoor sports as well as more wrestling facilities and instructional space.

Barreto also pointed to \$300,000 in funding for Athena's Gem Theater to finish an ongoing restoration project.

Smith also supported the EOU project, even though it was outside his district. The \$9 million project was included in a news release from his office stating that a total of \$25 million projects directly benefiting District 57 were passed out of the Joint Ways and Means Committee

between the capital construction, budget reconciliation and bond authorization bills. Smith is a co-vice chair of the committee, which oversees the state's budget.

For Umatilla County, that list also included \$6,125,000 for biomass heating upgrades to Camp Umatilla, the National Guard training facility being renovated and expanded on the former Umatilla Chemical Depot. It also included increased funding for the Oregon Food Bank, Center for Violence Prevention Research and Oregon Psychiatric Access Line Program which are seeking to expand their reach into Eastern Oregon with the extra dollars.

A news release from Hansell's office noted many of the same projects as Barreto and Smith, as well as \$50,000 for an elk-culling project near Cold Springs National Refuge. He also pointed to non-capital appropriations for statewide programs that could benefit eastern Oregon residents, including increased dollars for combating sex trafficking, transportation in rural areas, lead testing in daycare facilities, technical assistance grants for eastern Oregon counties, regional solutions and veterans services.

"These investments will help Eastern Oregon build better infrastructure and a strong economy that will help all Eastern Oregonians prosper," Hansell said in a statement. "Although the Umatilla County Jail project was unsuccessful this session, I intend to bring the request back before the Legislature next session."

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