

Cops: Police chiefs have concerns as state mandates new data collection

Continued from Page A1

body to be a male or female, doesn't mean they are male or female," Edmiston said. "And when you perceive race, I think you are on a slippery slope."

Boardman Police Chief Rick Stokoe expressed a similar concern.

"I don't want our officers to guess," he said. "That's not what our job is. We're to go out and look for crime."

Boardman police and most other agencies in Umatilla and Morrow counties rely on the same police records management system, Sun Ridge Inc., which is creating software to help agencies gather the data. Stokoe said Boardman police will start in as soon as the software clicks.

Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts said habitual offenders raise another red flag. Pendleton has some drivers who are members of minorities and who receive multiple traffic citations a week.

"That totally taints your statistical information," he said.

And while the state has promised to contact agencies when blips arise, Roberts said he found that hard to believe given the 180 or so agencies in Oregon.

Data collection is nothing new for police. Oregon law



Pendleton Police officer Cass Clark checks his notebook while working on a recent burglary case on a computer recently at the Pendleton Police Department.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

requires agencies to report crime data, which Oregon State Police sift through and compile each year into reports of several hundred pages to show everything from the number of murders in Oregon to officer assaults.

According to state police, the Oregon Annual Uniform Crime Reports have an error rate of approximately 1 percent.

Yet the 2017 report, the most recent for a full year, shows gaps in the 162 agencies it lists. The Harney County Sheriff's Office and University of Oregon Police Department were among 17

agencies that did not submit up to six months of data in time for the 2017 report, and 25 agencies, often small and rural, submitted no data, including the sheriff's offices of Grant, Gilliam, Sherman and Wallowa counties.

Pendleton police did not submit 11 months of data for the 2017 report. Roberts explained there were hang-ups in trying to ensure the data's error rate did not exceed the 4 percent standard. The department finally provided the statistics for 2017 in late November.

Roberts said the race and

'I DON'T WANT OUR OFFICERS TO GUESS,' HE SAID. 'THAT'S NOT WHAT OUR JOB IS. WE'RE TO GO OUT AND LOOK FOR CRIME.'

gender data could run into similar issues. About 60 percent of agencies in Oregon have 10 or fewer people, he said, and those smaller departments often do not have a records manager to check the accuracy of the information, creating room for error-ridden data.

Pendleton police does not have to start gathering the data until July 1, 2021, but Roberts said the department, like Boardman, will go with it as soon as the software allows. But he has doubts about what it all could lead to.

"If they find some bad actors out there, more power to them," Roberts said. "But I think they will find with all the amounts of data out there, they aren't going to know one way or another."

Even he, like the other chiefs, said their departments will do what the Legislature requires.

Communication: Grants give teachers tech boost for life skills

Continued from Page A1

app for two iPads for use in the Life Skills classroom.

Carlson said some students have the app on their personal tablets, and she can see it being useful both in and outside of school.

During the school day, she plans to have students program spelling words or comprehension questions specific to the lesson on the tablets.

Highland Hills principal Jake Bacon said when he observed Carlson teaching, all the students were able to respond to her questions with the use of the app.

Outside of school, Carlson said the app can benefit students in daily communication.

"I could see it being really useful for kids who want to order something at a restaurant," she said. "For a person who can't communicate in traditional ways, that's huge."

Across town, Armand Larive Middle School teacher Lori White wanted a way to help her students be able to make their voices heard on stage.

White, a language arts teacher, began teaching theater at the school a few years ago, and wanted



Instructor Mindy Walchli, center, helps students recycle office paper from classrooms in a life skills class at Sandstone Middle School in Hermiston.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

to purchase some micro-phones and headsets for

students to use during performances.

They started with three headsets, but that limited the number of students that could be on stage at any time.

"The class is very popular," she said. "Last term I had 48 kids sign up."

Two years ago, she said, she applied for a HEF grant and was able to purchase seven headsets, and with this year's grant, she bought four more.

The headsets are also used by other teachers throughout the district, she said.

This January, White

said, the students will be performing a comedy-murder mystery.

White said the drama program has been a place for students who may not have found one elsewhere.

"Some kids don't do music, they don't do sports — there are kids who want to be a part of something, they want to perform, but they're not in those other niches," she said. "And kids who may not fit the normal mode of what people think are actors, they come out and are spectacular."

White received \$1,200 from HEF for the headsets.

Vacation: Council explores collecting tax money on vacation rentals

Continued from Page A1

consultant after she retired in 2014.

In a region where some communities have banned vacation rentals altogether, Johnson helped Astoria to help capture more lodging tax revenue and crack down on illegal rentals.

On Airbnb alone, there's more than 300 vacation rentals available in the Astoria area.

While Astoria doesn't ban whole-home vacation rentals completely, they are prohibited in residential areas. Residents are allowed to rent out a room or a portion of their home in the short term as long as

it remains owner occupied, a setup the city refers to as homestay lodging.

Johnson said Astoria originally adopted these rules because vacation rentals were tightening the housing market for permanent city dwellers and affecting neighborhoods' quality of life through congestion and overcrowding.

"We don't want to be a second home community," she said.

Astoria further strengthened those laws this year when it required homestay lodging providers to acquire business license and prohibiting them from advertising online without one.

Johnson said the new code makes it easier for city officials to root out illegal vacation rentals by cross-referencing them with their business license database. The city expects the license fees — \$250 per year for the first two years and \$75 per year after that — will subsidize the cost of enforcing the code.

Although Pendleton is a ways off from dealing with the type of vacation rental market Astoria has, it is considering other measures to collect more lodging tax money.

Beard said he would like to see the city collect its lodging taxes on a monthly basis instead of quarterly

because some hotel owners or managers use the tax money they owe as a "slush fund" instead of paying.

Finance Director Linda Carter said only two hotels are behind on their payments, which equates to less than \$10,000 owed to the city.

Carter said collection has gotten better since the city strengthened its penalties for late payments, and switching to monthly collection would overburden finance department staff and the city attorney.

She added that the corporate-owned hotels tend to

pay their taxes on time, but the smaller, family-owned operations are the facilities that occasionally give the city trouble.

"How much work are we doing just to catch that one ma and pa that may go south at some point?" she said. "I don't know."

McKay Creek Estates



FREE Cognitive Screening

Is Mom a little more forgetful lately?

There are many early warning signs of a potential memory disorder, such as Alzheimer's disease. That's why we're offering a **FREE** and **CONFIDENTIAL** cognitive screening. We encourage anyone who is concerned about cognitive decline to take this short, in-person screening. The screening is administered by a qualified health care professional.

To schedule your cognitive screening today, please call **(541) 704-7146**.

McKay Creek Estates
1601 Southgate Pl.
Pendleton, OR 97801

 Prestige Senior Living, L.L.C.

www.PrestigeCare.com

EAST OREGONIAN Hermiston Herald

EARLY HOLIDAY DEADLINES

Christmas deadlines:
 Tues., 12/25 East Oregonian - Fri., 12/21
 Wed., 12/26 Hermiston Herald - Thurs. 12/20

New Year's deadlines:
 Tues., 1/1 East Oregonian - Fri., 12/28
 Wed., 1/2 Hermiston Herald - Thurs. 12/27

Holiday Hours for both offices:
 Christmas Eve: 8am-Noon
 Closed Christmas Day

New Years Eve: 8am-Noon
 Closed New Years Day

