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Staff photo by E.J. Harris

A procession of marchers makes its way down Main Street while participating in a Martin Luther King march Monday in Hermiston. The annual march is put on by the Hermiston Cultural Awareness Club.

Unions look to leverage Democratic leadership

Legislative session begins with union-friendly body

By AUBREY WIEBER
Oregon Capital Bureau

In November, educators and school children got a champion. The homeless got an advocate and environmentalists got a steward. But perhaps the people most happy with Gov. Kate Brown's re-election reside in Oregon's union shops.

Brown has long been pro union. She has publicly supported them and even had the president of a national teachers union stump for her during her campaign.

Unions have backed Brown as well. Her six biggest union donors gave nearly \$1 million combined in 2018. Now, with Democrats having a stronger majority in the House and Senate, union leaders say it's time to push their pro-worker agenda.

"It's time to do something bold," said Melissa Unger, executive director for Service Employees International Union Local 503, which represents about 70,000 state workers and caregivers.

Unions have weakened through the country compared to their power in decades past but remain strong and active in Oregon.

In the 2018 election, SEIU 49 gave House Speaker Tina Kotek \$50,000 though she had no serious challenger. SEIU 503 provided \$42,000 in in-kind contributions to Future PAC, which covered wages, general expenses and surveys. Future PAC is the House Democrats' campaign fundraising arm.

The Oregon Education Association gave Sen. Shemia Fagan's campaign \$15,000 and she received \$20,000 from the Oregon chapter of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, despite having a large lead in her primary contest.

Unions also gave to the Senate Democrat Leadership Fund, which then spread money around to various caucus leaders. SEIU gave \$15,000 to the PAC in 2018 in the form of travel expenses and wages. The national AFL-CIO gave \$10,000.

House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson also got \$10,000 from AFL-CIO, as well as \$13,500 from Local 48 Electricians. United Food & Commercial Workers Union

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'Step out of your shell'

Hermiston march honors King's legacy with call to get active

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Of all the timeless lessons Martin Luther King Jr. taught the world, an individual's responsibility and power to make the world a better place was a focus of Monday's annual march in Hermiston.

"It's amazing what we can do as people, as Americans," keynote speaker Joe Whitfield said.

Whitfield, who recently moved to Hermiston, was born in Montgomery, Alabama, four years after Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat for white passengers on a Montgomery bus. As a child, he helped his father bring water to civil rights marchers and attended segregated schools.

After students from his school were integrated with students from predominately white schools, Whitfield said sports helped bridge the gap between students of both races as they learned to work as a team. Today, he said, people should still work patiently to find common ground and understanding with those who are different than them.

"Sit down and work it out," he said. "You may not agree on everything, but you can still work through it, if you put in enough patience and time."

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Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Speaker Joe Whitfield of Hermiston talks about Martin Luther King Jr.'s six principles of nonviolence on Monday during a service for Martin Luther King Jr. Day in Hermiston.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Lynette Ford repairs nail holes on a display wall at the Pendleton Center for the Arts during Monday's National Day of Service.

Day of service honors MLK's vision of a 'beloved community'

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

"I think MLK would approve."

Ruth Hall made the comment Monday morning as she gazed around the Pendleton Center for the Arts pottery studio where a contingent of people scrubbed walls, mopped and cleaned brushes. Hall stood on a ladder washing windows. Others worked upstairs in the gallery and theater or outside removing sodden leaves from an outdoor stairwell.

The motto of the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service is "Day On, Not a Day Off" and these folks embraced the idea with gusto.

Executive Director Roberta Lavadour looked around gratefully. She too thought King would have appreciated the scene and felt the arts center was an appropriate venue for such an effort. The center, Lavadour said, is a place that brings people of all stripes together.

"Everyone feels welcome here," she said. "There are people in this building today of all political persuasions, of all religious persuasions. They are all here doing something for the common good. That is the essence of MLK's message."

Lavadour lined out the

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Solidarity Walk focuses on unity

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

Marchers in this weekend's Solidarity Walk in Pendleton began by remembering the words of a man harassed several days ago by a group of teenagers on the National Mall.

Nathan Phillips, a Vietnam veteran and member of the Omaha Tribe, was mocked in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 18 by the boys, mostly white and sporting "Make America Great Again" caps, who were visiting from their Catholic school in Kentucky. As Phillips sang and drummed near the Lincoln Monument, one boy smirked and stood inches away. Others mimicked the man. Phillips continued drumming and singing, appearing calm. The

incident sparked outrage on social media.

Solidarity Walk organizer Willa Wallace described the Native American drummer's response as she spoke to the crowd of almost 50 gathered at Brownfield Park on Sunday.

"Nathan Phillips, in the face of hatred, stayed peaceful in song and prayer," Wallace said. "He responded without anger, but with wisdom and hope."

She quoted Phillips as saying afterward, "I wish I could see that mass of young men put that energy into making this country, really, really great."

Marchers took the thought with

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Staff photo by Kathy Aney

About 50 people braved the rain Sunday to participate in the Solidarity Walk, which focused on unity.



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