

Teens: Campus Life offers activities and a space for them to hang out

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and realize that kids who were acting out were often doing so because something else was going on behind the scenes. Seeing former gang members from big cities get scared of coyotes or a rustling in the bushes helped him remember that even though they had seen a lot, they were still “just kids.” And there were students at Jubilee who started out trying to make his life miserable and later trusted him enough to confide about trauma they had experienced.

“You definitely have to have a heart for (working with teens),” he said. “You can’t just be doing it as a job.”

Now the Umbargers host high school night on Mondays and a newer middle school night on Tuesdays at the Campus Life building, plus take groups of teens out on weekends for snowboarding or rafting trips. They also open up the building after high school football and basketball games to



Contributed photo by Ashley Umbarger
Campus Life teens pose for a photo after a recent weekend snowboarding trip at Bluewood.

give students a safe place to hang out together after the game.

On Monday, teens started to trickle in after 7 p.m. A group of boys and girls sat on a circle of couches, chat-

ting, while one teen grabbed dinner from the snack shack and ate it while scrolling through his phone. Other groups gravitated toward air hockey or ping pong, and a few sophomore boys started

a game of pool.

At the pool table, Connor Carr, Logan Ham and Nate King said Campus Life provided a safe place where they could hang out with friends without being under

the watchful eyes of their parents.

“It’s nice to slow down on a Monday,” Nate said.

Logan said he liked that the Umbargers were cool and “not very strict.” There are also more activities to choose from at the Campus Life building than at friends’ houses.

Connor appreciated the Umbargers, too.

“They’re really chill and easy to talk to,” he said.

After free time on Mondays and Tuesdays, students usually gather for some ice-breaker games and a 20-minute message. The high school night usually attracts about 30 students and the middle school nights sometimes get as many as 50.

Campus Life is an independent nonprofit not run by a specific church, but it does have Christian overtones. Sometimes the talks at the end of the night discuss religious themes. Other times they show scenes from uplifting secular movies such as “Up,” then use it to discuss bullying, peer pressure or other topics rele-

vant to high school and middle school students.

Jeff said Campus Life isn’t meant to replace church youth groups, and he and Ashley try to make sure they aren’t infringing on local church activities. But some students who would never set foot in a church are willing to come play pool with their friends and might hear a positive message about Christianity in the process.

Ashley said they are also planning on starting a Celebrate Recovery night on Thursdays that will help teens deal with addictions, bad habits and “hang-ups” they might have.

On Saturday, Campus Life is hosting a fundraiser dinner to support its mission. “The Gathering” will take place at 6 p.m. at the Hermiston Community Center, 415 S. Highway 395. Tickets are \$20 per ticket or \$140 for a table seating eight, and the event will include a silent auction, dinner and live music. For more information or to purchase tickets contact Ashley Umbarger at 541-969-1017.

Settlement: BOLI admits politicized investigation as solons vow to fix problems

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was flawed.

In a statement Tuesday with the settlement, the bureau said its process “was politicized in a manner that inhibited both sides from participating thoroughly in the investigation.”

The state labor bureau’s report in January painted an unflattering picture of many lawmakers and staff, some of whom publicly complained that the report was inaccurate and they hadn’t be interviewed.

“I frankly wish he did more work,” Kotek said in January. “His investigation was very limited and based on a few sources. I don’t know why he didn’t take more time. Maybe it had something to do with him leaving.”

Amid the national #MeToo reckoning over sexual harassment, two female state senators came forward in late 2017 to allege sexual harassment by Sen. Jeff Kruse, a Republican from Roseburg.

Kruse resigned in March 2018 after an outside investigation found he touched women at work inappropriately for years without their consent.

In its January report, the labor bureau detailed what it said was substantial evidence that legislative staff and leaders didn’t act appropriately or swiftly enough to curb harassment at the Capitol.

The report found that legislative leaders didn’t take “immediate and appropriate corrective action, or in many cases, any action, in response to complaints of incidents of sexual harassment that they knew or should have known about, in particular regarding former Senator Kruse but also with respect to other members of the Legislative Assembly.”

The report described

how several women who complained of harassment, from interns to employees, were in many cases advised by legislative officials not to discuss the allegations for fear that talking about it could be perceived as retaliatory.

“The record suggests respondents had a higher concern for people who had allegations brought against them rather than for people bringing forward complaints of inappropriate conduct they or others had experienced,” the report stated.

The report also mentioned how Courtney told an employee in his office she could “either resign, be fired or demoted” because he didn’t like that she was dating a state representative. This person told the state labor bureau that she was told that if she resigned, Courtney’s office would pay her five months’ salary with benefits.

Another employee, referred to as Employee A, reported that a person who was working in the Capitol — who had sexually assaulted her before they worked in the Capitol — asked her to describe her current sexual relationship with another person.

Employee A “was cautioned against talking with anyone regarding the complaint, investigation, or recommendations,” because it could be perceived as retaliating against the person who had inquired, by legislative counsel Dexter Johnson, according to the report.

Yet another employee, Employee B, reported that Courtney’s communications director, Robin Maxey, offered to buy her a beer at an event, and “stood so close as to be touching the side of his body with hers,” and repeated that even after she moved over to the other side of the bar. He then sent her

song lyrics that she considered “sexually lewd,” over Facebook. Maxey resigned after BOLI released its report.

Two interns who worked for Kruse — who were not identified in the report but later came forward publicly — were also mentioned in the BOLI report.

The settlement states that the two will drop lawsuits they filed against the Legislature that sought \$6.7 million.

Anne Montgomery and Adrianna Martin-Wyatt interned for Kruse when they were law students during the 2017 session. They claimed in their suit that legislative leaders didn’t do enough to prevent harassment or change Kruse’s behavior toward them.

“Defendants expressed callous indifference to reports of Kruse’s misconduct, and fostered an environment wherein complaints were discouraged with threats of retaliation, legal exposure, and negative career implications,” the lawsuit states.

According to the lawsuit, Kruse subjected both women to sexual banter and unwanted touching, and that behavior seemed common knowledge among legislators and staff.

Kruse, according to the lawsuit, addressed Montgomery as “little girl,” “my baby lawyer,” and “sexy,” multiple times.

He asked about her sex life, touched her thighs, placed his head on hers as she sat at her desk working, and gave frequent, lingering hugs.

Kruse asked Martin-Wyatt about her sex life, asked to be invited over to her house at night, wrapped his arms around her and slid his arms down the front of her body across her breasts, touched her hips, hugged and squeezed her tightly

and massaged her shoulders while she was working on the computer, according to the lawsuit.

Both women took steps to avoid Kruse’s touching and comments. Martin-Wyatt obtained additional work with another state legislator, and spent half the day in that senator’s office, but ultimately left her position early in the middle of the 2017 session.

Montgomery stopped wearing makeup, started wearing baggy clothes and moved her desk to work in another legislator’s office.

But another legal claim over workplace culture is pending.

A lawyer who used to work in the Office of Legislative Counsel, which drafts bills and provides legal advice to legislators, has filed two lawsuits pertaining to her treatment at work.

In 2017, Gail Stevens sued the state and Johnson alleging she was fired from that office “for reporting mismanagement, opposing and reporting unlawful practices, discussing wages and opposing pay inequity.”

Last month, Stevens sued Courtney and Kotek, claiming that the presiding officers failed to protect her from the retaliation she experienced.

The bureau’s final report also recounts Kruse’s unwanted physical contact with Gelser and Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, D-Portland.

Both senators filed formal complaints against Kruse in late 2017, alleging that for years he had touched them inappropriately at work without their consent.

The Legislature hired an outside attorney to investigate the allegations, which resulted in a report finding that Kruse repeatedly subjected women to unwanted touching despite warnings

to stop.

Gelser took to Twitter Tuesday to say she was “in awe of the courage of Students A&B, Staff persons 1&2 for bringing their complaint” through Avakian.

“This unprecedented 7 figure settlement to acknowledge & remedy harm experienced by women only happened because of them,” Gelser continued.

This week’s settlement would also give teeth to recommendations by a special work group convened by the Oregon Law Commission. It recommended late last year ways to improve the workplace culture at the Capitol.

The work group suggested creating an independent office to receive workplace complaints, finding a way to take complaints confidentially and abolish a legislative rule that only allows complainants to file a sexual harassment complaint within a year of the incident.

The settlement sets deadlines for the Legislature to implement the commission’s suggestions.

The settlement should make it easier for victims to report harassment. It tasks the Legislature with setting up at least three ways to receive complaints, including anonymous ones.

The state investigation found that in the past, the reporting system was flawed and sometimes resulted in victims feeling intimidated or silenced.

Johnson and Human Resources Director Lore Christopher were criticized heavily in the BOLI report. As part of the settlement, their offices will be removed from the reporting process.

The Legislature also convened a special committee on Capitol Culture, which began meeting in January. Presiding officers and majority caucus leaders have touted the committee’s work during the session,

pointing to it as proof that they are eager to improve working conditions.

This week’s settlement appears to be the first payments stemming from harassment issues at the Legislature in at least a decade.

Between 2009 and January 2019, no payments were made on sexual harassment complaints at the Legislature, according to the Oregon Department of Administrative Services. The state is self-insured for such claims, meaning it pays such costs out of the general fund.

The Associated Press found last year that eight states paid out \$3 million in sexual harassment claims since 2008. But the actual total is likely much higher, the AP reported.

Jeanne Atkins, chair of the Democratic Party of Oregon, recently urged Senate Democrats “to take whatever steps are necessary to unite around a strong message of your commitment to the eradication of discrimination and harassment in the state capitol, and to take strong action to establish a new era of positive and respectful dynamics between members, staff and the public.”

She said that among grass roots Democratic activists, there was concern that public statements didn’t reflect the urgency of improving workplace conditions in the statehouse.

“They fear that concern about position and authority, and division among the ranks, is undermining the public message that is so very necessary — a message that harassment and abuse of authority, including everything from overt discrimination to use of intemperate language with the public and subordinates — will not be tolerated in the Capitol,” Atkins wrote.

Jobs: Hundreds of vacancies in Eastern Oregon reflect growing area

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industries, a large portion is due to increased economic activity,” he said.

Rich also noted that because the surveys asked employers to give the number of openings they have at that point in time, that may create some discrepancies in annual data.

“We could catch a business right before or right after they have a vacancy,” he said. “It creates some choppiness from year to year.”

On Tuesday, OED also released statewide employment numbers for January 2019, and will release city and county breakdowns next Tuesday. Oregon’s employ-

ment numbers increased, with the state seeing a jump of 11,000 jobs in nonfarm payroll employment, after a loss of about 1,700 jobs in December 2018. From December 2017 to December 2018, the state’s overall numbers increased by 1.6 percent, or about 29,500 nonfarm jobs.

Umatilla County saw a slight drop in overall nonfarm employment, going from 28,260 jobs in December 2017 to 28,150 in December 2018, or a drop of about 0.4 percent. Morrow County saw a larger overall jump, going from 4,750 nonfarm employees in December 2017 to 5,090 in December 2018, a jump of about 7.2 percent.

Nonfarm payroll employment refers to all jobs in goods, construction and manufacturing companies. It doesn’t include agricultural workers, private household employees or nonprofit employees. Oregon Employment Department economist Dallas Fridley said that distinction is made by the way different industries’ unemployment insurance laws are administered. Fridley said many farm jobs are categorized as “self employed,” and fewer agricultural workers are subject to unemployment insurance laws than those from other industries.

Statewide, transportation, warehousing and utilities saw the fastest growth,

adding 3,800 new jobs, or a growth of 5.9 percent. Construction jobs did not see as fast of growth as they’d seen in past years, adding 4,100 jobs, or an increase of 4 percent. Manufacturing jobs also grew by 3.4 percent, or about 6,600 jobs. Retail jobs were down, decreasing by 0.8 percent, or 1,800 jobs. According to a press release from OED, that was the only industry to cut jobs substantially in the past 12 months.

Morrow County’s job growth outpaced the state average, especially in construction jobs, where it saw an 87 percent increase in those jobs over 2018, from 80 construction jobs to 150. The state had a 4.5 percent increase in construction

jobs. For Umatilla County, mining, logging and construction were all counted together and increased by 5 percent.

Ryan Neal, director of the Port of Morrow, said most of the growth is driven by development at port sites.

“You’ve got all these data centers bringing in hundreds of construction jobs,” he said. “We have continuous site development, another site just broke ground in city limits.”

He added that there aren’t many properties available to lease, because almost everything is already leased out. Neal said there will be even more construction jobs in the area soon, when the Wheatridge energy project

breaks ground. Neal said work on that site is projected to create about 400 construction jobs.

Umatilla County saw small decreases in most areas of employment, including a 19.7 percent drop in state government jobs. Morrow County saw a 50 percent decrease in state government jobs, going from 140 to 70. Oregon saw a 3.1 percent overall increase in state jobs. Umatilla County’s largest increase was in education and health services jobs, with an 11 percent increase. Statewide, those jobs saw a 2.3 percent increase, and in Morrow County, education and health service jobs increased by 31.6 percent.