

Librarians: Only 3 full-time librarians in Umatilla County school districts

Continued from Page A1

Media Services Brittany Young fields questions from students about plagiarism and finding source material for research projects, online and in books.

She said the role of media literacy stretches beyond college and that being able to scrutinize sources of information can help online shoppers and job-seekers alike.

“As information technology changes, we’re here to walk you through. Not having licensed librarians in schools creates more gaps,” she said.

Umatilla School District did staff a full-time librarian for years. When he retired, Superintendent Heidi Sipe said it was difficult to find someone to fill that gap.

“There was just no one out there with that library media experience and certification,” she said. “We used to do a pretty intensive research curriculum for kids, and a lot of media literacy. But now it really falls on the teachers’ shoulders.”

For now, the district’s English language teacher splits his time between managing the district’s libraries and teaching kids.

The American Library Association doesn’t list any Oregon universities in its database of accredited schools. Young knows of one university where people can gain a Masters of



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Third-graders Aaron Manning, left, and Noah Aparicio read the book “What Do They Do With All That Poo?” in the library at Highland Hills Elementary School on Thursday in Hermiston. The books were part of a donation of books that the school received from Harley Swain Subaru on Thursday morning.

Library Science, the Portland branch of Emporia State University, a Kansas school.

According to the ESU website, 15.7% of their 2017 graduates worked in school libraries nationwide.

Jennifer Maurer, a school library consultant for Oregon, estimates that based off of Oregon’s 2018 Quality Education Model — established to help legislators make funding decisions about schools — districts should have one half-time licensed librarian for each elementary school, and a full-time licensed librar-

ian for all middle and high schools.

Across Oregon, schools are falling short of that and have been for years. In 1980, the ratio was 547 students per librarian and 0.64 librarians per school.

In 2017, according to the ODE, it was 0.13 librarians per school and 3,652 students per librarian.

In Hermiston, the current ratio — two full-time licensed librarians to the district’s 5,757 students — is less dramatic.

Years ago, when district secondary librarian Delia Fields was still a teacher,

she remembers each of the eight district schools had a librarian.

Today, she’s in charge of the high school and middle schools, while first-year Elementary Library Coordinator Miranda Hunt oversees the five primary schools.

“It’s hard to learn names and assess their needs,” Hunt said. “I try my best. What’s really surprised me is how many kids come into the library to read or learn to research.”

She said she’s thankful the district has media assistants, who keep the libraries alive day to day, as Hunt

travels between the five schools every week.

Fields is a teaching-librarian, which means she has certification in both library science and teaching. She tries to disseminate knowledge to students district-wide, sometimes by emailing out lesson plans about how to research.

“We’ve had to become more creative,” she said. “I’m here to do my part, but in schools where there’s not a librarian, the teachers do what they can, when they can, but that’s not part of their curriculum.”

She also manages the multi-thousand-dollar flow of textbooks through the district.

For Fields, who is also the Region 6 representative for the Oregon Association of School Librarians, the billion-dollar Student Success Act, passed by state legislators in May, could put licensed librarians back into schools.

She hopes districts will pour some of their allotted share into library resources, and consider upping the librarian staffing levels that fell after the 2008 recession.

District continuous improvement plans, which are part of the application process for Student Success Act money, are due to the state by Dec. 6. They must include information about library programs, and some districts may end up using their portion of funds to pro-

pel libraries in schools.

Aaron Duff, the superintendent of the Milton-Freewater School District, said the district does have an on-site, full-time licensed librarian, who was hired internally.

“We were able to find some dollars in the budget that could align to (a librarian),” he said. “But it’s the same amount of money as a teacher. It’s usually one of the first things that have to go.”

He thinks some Student Success Act dollars could go to keep that person in place and sustain the program, rather than add to it.

The Pendleton School District has one part-time licensed librarian, according to Matt Yoshioka, the district’s director of curriculum, instruction and assessment.

He said that the number of students heading to the library has decreased as students research on in-class Chromebook computers.

In an age where information is available to anyone with internet access, Fields holds onto hope. She said she could see how people feel that they can navigate new digital spaces on their own.

“But (schools) are finding that you still need the qualified instruction to go with it,” she said. “Libraries are proving to be stronger places of need than ever before.”

Democrats: District 10 Senate seat in Salem up for grabs 2 years early

Continued from Page A1

Democrats are making a play for the seat to keep or expand their 18-12 supermajority in the Senate. Republicans are seeking to bolster Sen. Denyc Boles’ campaign to retain the seat she was appointed to in June. Of the Senate seats that will be on the 2020 ballot, nine are currently held by Republicans and seven by Democrats.

Winters, a well-liked moderate Republican, was elected to the seat in 2002. She was re-elected with lopsided victories despite Democrats gaining a narrow voter-registration advantage in the district.

In 2018, Democrats had their best showing in recent years for the seat when Patterson received 46% of the vote. With the Senate seat on the ballot next year amid

the high turnout of a presidential election and without an established incumbent, Democrats see a chance.

“I really believe it’s a different race,” said Patterson.

Republicans are bullish that they’ll be able to keep the seat.

Jeff Heyen, chair of the Marion County Republican Party, said while a recall against Gov. Kate Brown failed to qualify earlier this month, the effort gathered a large number of signatures in a short period of time. He said the recall reflects strong discontent with the state’s Democratic leadership that’ll carry into next year’s elections.

“People are fed up with what the governor and our Legislature are doing,” he said.

Tom Powers, caucus administrator of the Sen-

ate Democratic Leadership Fund, pointed to support Boles has received from groups like Oregon Right to Life and the Oregon Firearms Federation that he said are out of step with the Salem district. He also said voters will hold Republicans accountable for the highly publicized walkout of Senate Republicans over climate change legislation last session.

In an interview, Boles declined to comment on the walkout, pointing out that she had yet to be appointed to the Senate seat when it occurred. Previously, Boles worked as a legislative staffer before being appointed to a vacant House seat in 2014. Boles did not run to keep the seat. In 2018, she was again appointed to fill a vacancy for the same House seat and successfully

ran for a full term.

Boles, 50, said she has lived in the district for much of her life and describes herself as a “limited-government girl” who has long maintained a Republican registration. She said that during her time in the Legislature, she brought a collaborative approach, similar to Winters.

She said she’s actively reached out to constituents while working on bipartisan bills on school bullying, mental health and issues affecting “disenfranchised people.”

“The Legislature is really driven by relationships and I’m good at relationships,” said Boles, who works in community relations for Salem Health Hospitals & Clinics.

Patterson, 63, has a background in health care advo-

cacy and currently serves as a congregational minister. She said that she’s running on economic issues, such as stagnant wages, as well as the rising costs of health care, college and housing. Patterson, who has lived in the district for about 10 years, said she’ll work collaboratively toward “win-win” solutions.

“I believe we can get an Oregon that works for everyone,” she said.

Evan Sorce, chair of the Marion County Democrats, said he expects Patterson’s message to go over well in the district as its political makeup has changed over the years.

Although no other candidates have filed to run, the filing deadline is March 10, 2020.

In recent years, Democrats have gained a small

voter registration edge. As of December 2010, 38% of voters in the district were registered Republicans to 37% that were registered Democrats. As of December 2018, 31% of voters in the district were registered Democrats to Republicans’ 30%.

In the 2018 general election, 69% of eligible voters in the district participated. Of those, 80% of Democrats voted to 82% of Republicans.

Evan Ridley, political director of the Leadership Fund (the campaign arm of Senate Republicans), said in an email the fund is backing Boles and is confident she’ll be re-elected.

According to the state’s campaign finance database, Patterson has raised \$12,765 in 2019 and has a cash balance of \$20,581. Boles has raised \$31,070 in 2019 and has a balance of \$34,039.

Assault: 2 teenage boys arrested and charged with third-degree assault

Continued from Page A1

followed him.

He and Rossy crossed the 10th Street Bridge with the teen in tow on a scooter. Wehrli said he popped up his smartphone and began videoing the pursuit and relentless insults. He said he wanted the video in case he had to show evidence to police.

Wehrli neared the Eighth Street Bridge, and by now a second youth joined the first. The pair threatened him, Wehrli said. They did not care he had a dog. One shouted that his buddy had the right to beat him.

“I told them to go home,” he said.

They closed on him.

“They both ganged up on

me, punched me, pushed me into the side of the concrete wall and one kicked me in the head,” he said.

They shoved him over the small retaining wall along the levee and onto the jagged rocks below, he said, and they threw rocks at him before taking off.

Wehrli gathered himself and called 911. He made his way to nearby Til Taylor Park and met Pendleton police officer Cody Porter. City EMTs responded to check out Wehrli, clean his injuries and bandage his right wrist. He still has scrapes on that hand and wrist, deep red scratches on a lower leg and a scab at the top of his forehead that could be from the kick.

Porter gave Wehrli and

Rossy a ride to cruise west-bound Court Avenue in hopes of spotting the teens. They entered the 700 block of Southwest Court and Wehrli saw them with two girls.

Wehrli said the officer asked if it was them. It was.

Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts said Porter questioned the pair.

“They made statements that are specific to them being responsible for the assault,” Roberts said.

Two other officers showed up and put the cuffs on the boys, who are 15 and 16. Roberts said police eventually released them to relatives, but because this appears to be two-on-one, they face the charge of third-degree assault.

“We’re talking about felony assault in this situation,” he said.

The case now goes to the Umatilla County District Attorney’s Office, and the teens are old enough to face prosecution as adults. Wehrli said he wants the law to punish them to the full extent, and his family is pushing for charges of second-degree assault because of the rock throwing.

Third-degree assault is a Class C felony and carries the threat of a prison sentence up to five years and a maximum fine of \$125,000, but jail time or probation are more likely outcomes for the crime. Second-degree assault, however, falls under Oregon’s mandatory minimum prison sentenc-

ing law and carries a minimum sentence of five years, 10 months.

Wehrli said he is recovering from the assault, but it shook him good. Family and friends have been supportive, he said, and Rossy remains loving as ever. He said he wants people to be aware of what happened to him.

Roberts called the case odd. Sometimes teens around this age “puff up” and act tough, he said, but it is not common for them to just go after a 30-year-old man. He also said nothing points to Wehrli egging on the youth or seeking out a confrontation.

“This guy wasn’t looking for any trouble and didn’t want any part of it,”

Roberts said.

Some commenters on social media in the wake of the assault have painted the parkway as unsafe. Roberts said he does not have police data to substantiate those assertions.

“Assaults on the River Parkway are rare, maybe a couple times a year,” he said.

The parkway has issues, and people complain about the homeless population on or along the parkway, but Roberts said few people report problems as crime on the parkway, including assault.

The police chief also added Wehrli or anyone else faced with an attacker “would have been justified to defend himself by whatever means necessary.”

Voter: Hermiston School District superintendent answered bond measure questions

Continued from Page A1

cost of a primary race and shortening the amount of time between when a commissioner is elected and when they take office.

“Elections cost money,” Elfering said.

If there are more than two candidates who file, they will appear on the ballot in May, and the top two vote-getters will advance to a general election in November.

Wednesday’s forum was also attended by Hermiston School District Superintendent Tricia Mooney, who answered audience questions about the bond measure appearing on Hermiston ballots.

If passed, the \$82.7 million bond plus \$6.6 million in matching funds from the state would pay for replacement of Rocky Heights Elementary School, a new elementary school on Theater

Lane and a new annex added to the high school. It is not expected to raise the current school bond tax rate of \$3.65 per \$1,000 of assessed value, and would be paid off within 26 years.

In answer to a question about whether the city and county giving Amazon a break on property taxes would affect the bond, Mooney said the planned development, while located in Hermiston’s enterprise

zone, is actually located in the boundaries of Stanfield School District, not Hermiston’s, and the tax dollars would have gone there.

“Hermiston School District would not see any money from that,” she said.

However, Amazon has agreed to donate \$50,000 a year to Hermiston School District, in recognition that its employees will likely have children in the district. Since the money is

considered a voluntary gift, not tax revenue, it will not count against the amount of per-student dollars the school district gets from the state each year.

In answer to other questions about the bond, Mooney shared that the new elementary schools would likely open two years after the bond’s passage. Whether or not the bond passes, she said, the district will need to go through the process of

adjusting boundaries for the elementary schools within the next two years.

She said in response to feedback from voters, this bond will not go toward any deferred maintenance, such as the new roof for Sandstone Middle School that was included in the 2017 bond that did not pass.

“We did some tightening of the belt and fixed that roof using general fund dollars,” Mooney said.