

# Review: Volunteers must live or work in either Umatilla or Morrow counties

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reappointed by the court every two years. That gives an out for them if they wanna step away, and it also gives an out to the agency and to us, if we feel like our board member is not doing an adequate job.”

Nichols said every child in the state’s foster care system has their case reviewed every six months by a judge or by the citizen review board to ensure the foster child is receiving adequate care.

“We’re really reviewing the cases to see if the agency is following what they need to be following,” he said. “And the CRB as a whole, including our local agency, has called attention to certain issues that are coming up that could be affecting the safety of kids. We had several cases of kids from Umatilla County who were in some of these out-of-state foster care placements that had safety issues going on there. We made recommendations along those lines.”

The Pendleton board meets on the second Thursday of the month to review the cases of children in foster care primarily in east Umatilla County, while the Hermiston board meets on the fourth Tuesday of the month and handles the cases of children in foster care primarily in west Umatilla County and Morrow County.

To serve on one of the citizen review boards, volunteers must be a resident or employed in either Umatilla County or Morrow County.

Nichols said his Umatilla County boards are made up of between two and seven volunteers.

“I like to have the numbers on the higher side because it allows for a little more freedom if somebody has to be gone or somebody gets sick or something of that issue,” he said.

Members of the CRB are given case files — ranging between 500 to 800 pages per month — between 10 to 14 days in advance of the monthly meeting. They then serve on a board for one day a month and review foster care cases with everyone

## MORE INFORMATION

For more information, contact John Nichols at 541-233-8142 or john.a.nichols@ojd.state.or.us. More information on the foster care citizen review board is available online at [www.courts.oregon.gov/programs/crb/](http://www.courts.oregon.gov/programs/crb/)

## TO APPLY

An application to serve as a volunteer on a foster care citizen review board is available online at [www.courts.oregon.gov/programs/crb/volunteer/Pages/Volunteer.aspx](http://www.courts.oregon.gov/programs/crb/volunteer/Pages/Volunteer.aspx)

involved in the case, which could include Oregon Department of Human Services caseworker, tribal representative, parents, attorneys, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), foster parents, and often the children themselves.

“They need to be able to read all that and process that information, and then come to our board days when we meet with all of the parties of the case and ask questions of the parties about how things are going,” Nichols said. “The board (has to look over all the information they received ahead of time, then come to our board day, and then) goes through a series of findings that they’re required to make and ask questions on each of those findings.”

Nichols said an important attribute for a board member is objectivity.

“The board needs to be somewhat judicious. They can’t let their passions or their biases towards the agency run them up,” he said. “They need to be listening to the facts, then making findings based on those facts. In many ways, the citizen review board is a court hearing. The board is really acting as the judge on a case, but we don’t make decisions for the case. We make recommendations back to the court or other parties.”



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

A sign encourages mask wearing and hand sanitization outside of a classroom at Sherwood Heights Elementary School in Pendleton on Monday, Feb. 22, 2021.

# Students:

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Superintendent Chris Fritsch was on hand at the elementary schools to ensure the first day back ran smoothly.

Fritsch said each school had masks and face shields on hand and would have COVID-19 tests available in March should students or staff start to show symptoms, although he was unsure how many students would opt into the testing program.

Given Pendleton’s recent track record with new COVID-19 cases, Fritsch said it was a good possibility that middle-

and high-schoolers would return to in-person classes on March 8 as district administrators finalize how they will divide up classes.

Fritsch said the district’s goal is to still have all students back all day, but it will be difficult unless the state relaxes its social distancing restrictions.

But at least for now, students seemed to be happy to be back in class.

When first grade teacher Deanna Mendel asked how many students were happy to be back in-person, her entire class’ hands shot up before she admitted that she too was excited, and was almost too excited to sleep the night before.

“It was like Christmas Eve,” she said.

# Certificate offers teachers trauma-invested education

Program is part of Eastern Oregon University’s Bridge Academy

East Oregonian

LA GRANDE — A new Trauma in Educational Communities Certificate offered at Eastern Oregon University responds to increased isolation, illness and financial hardship many families face.

The certificate opened for enrollment in fall 2020, and is only one of its kind recognized by the Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission. Teachers who complete the certificate program can add a specialization to their teaching license. With 18 credits, spread over six courses, students can earn the certificate in just less than a year, fully online.

“The program is intended to continue the professional development of educators who seek the skills and knowledge needed to work effectively in their classrooms and in their larger school communities to support students who have experienced trauma,” Education Professor Karyn Gomez said. “Classroom and school-wide practices



Eastern Oregon University/Contributed Photo

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that support students and provide trauma-informed learning environments will ultimately provide a more equitable education for all students.”

According to Gomez, decreases in disciplinary actions, more on-task learning time, reductions in school absenteeism, and stronger academic achievement can be signs of effective trauma-invested practices within a school.

The certificate is part of

EOU’s Bridge Academy, which bundles courses into applicable “bridges” that assist working adults looking to advance or change their careers. EOU also offers a Trauma in Educational Communities concentration in the Master of Science in Education degree program.

“The Trauma in Educational Communities Certificate is one of the ways that EOU can serve place-bound students due to its fully

online format,” Gomez said. “With this program, the College of Education is able to make a high-quality professional development program accessible to teachers in rural communities.”

In addition to the Trauma in Educational Communities Certificate, EOU’s Bridge Academy offers a Health Care Administration bridge and a Physical Education bridge. Learn more about these programs at [eou.edu/bridge-academy](http://eou.edu/bridge-academy).

# Heppner: ‘That’s the kind of stuff we don’t need’

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complacent. But when Dollar General comes in, that competition element changes. We’re not just competing with one store, we’re competing with all the Dollar General stores.”

When that happens, he said, communities sometimes lose out on options previously available to them. He pointed to media reports in recent years spotlighting communities where Dollar Generals that sold mostly processed foods replaced grocery stores with healthier options. If Dollar General put the Heppner Market out of business, Brannon said, he worries residents will have to start driving 50 miles into Hermiston if they want fresh produce or meat.

For its part, Dollar General argues the company helps families and individuals on a tight budget stretch their money further, providing an affordable, convenient source of necessities ranging from socks to toilet paper, often in areas with limited shopping options. In May 2020, the company announced plans to add fresh produce to at least 1,000 of its approximately 17,000 stores by the end of 2020.

When the *East Oregonian* reached out to Dollar General in December 2020 to ask about its work with the city of Umatilla’s planning commission on another possible Dollar General location, about an hour’s drive from Heppner, spokesperson Angela Petkovic said in an email that the company strives to provide affordable options to customers who may not have affordable shopping nearby.

She also pointed to charitable efforts the company undertakes in the communities it serves, including grants to local libraries and schools.

“Our customers are at the center of all that we do, and meeting customers’ needs is Dollar General’s top priority when choosing store locations,” she wrote at the time. “In selecting store sites, we take a number of factors into consideration, carefully evaluating each potential new store location to ensure we can continue to meet our customers’ price, value and selection needs.”

Some Heppner residents have their doubts about such promises, however. John Murray, who owns Murray Drug, said he feels a store run by a big corporation isn’t



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

John Murray, left, and Drew Brannon pose for a portrait in front of Murray’s Drug in Heppner on Friday, Feb. 19, 2021. The pair is opposing a potential Dollar General store in Heppner.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Aileen Wilson helps customers at Murray’s Drug in Heppner on Friday, Feb. 19, 2021.

right for Heppner because it could edge out businesses selling higher quality products. He gave an example of a class action lawsuit against Dollar General that involved the company selling motor oil that consumers purchased without realizing the instructions on the back of the bottle stated it was not suitable for engines built after 1988.

“That’s the kind of stuff we don’t need,” he said.

He said if a Dollar General opened in Heppner, there would likely be some overlap between products sold there and at Murray’s Drug, and while he believes most customers would stay loyal to the drug store, he would likely need to adjust the business somewhat in response.

Both Brannon and Murray said they would like to see the Heppner City Council pass an ordinance requiring that discount stores coming in to Heppner would have to devote

a certain percentage of floor space to fresh produce and meat.

Kraig Cutsforth, Heppner’s city manager, said that at the most recent city council meeting, eight community members attended in person with about two dozen more over Zoom, and four people spoke up to ask the council to consider what it might do to restrict discount chains from coming to town.

In response, Cutsforth put together a written statement welcoming input, but also stating that the city does not have a business license system and therefore does not regulate which businesses operate in city limits. The city does follow zoning codes and work with those who have questions about what is allowed in various zones, he said, but so far no discount store has submitted an application asking the city to change any zoning.

“In regards of what infor-

mation has been asked of the city, so far it has only been on permitted uses of the subject property and what utilities are available,” he wrote.

Dollar General has been expanding in Oregon recently. The *Walla Walla Union-Bulletin* reported in January that the company had broken ground on a new store in Milton-Freewater, and quoted City Manager Linda Hall saying the city always welcomes new business. Dollar General has been working with Umatilla’s planning commission on a possible location there. Each store would employ six to 10 people, the company said.

In Heppner, however, some residents are hoping the chain passes them by.

“I want to see growth, but I don’t see (Dollar General) putting into the community what I put into the community, and what my neighbors put into it,” Brannon said.