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## Program offers more preschool options

By ANDREW CUTLER  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Michelle Gomez is excited about the potential of a new program designed to provide opportunities for families to access and choose a preschool setting that best meets their needs.



Burnette

Preschool Promise, which was launched statewide late in 2020 and is aimed at 3- and 4-year-olds, is a model for a publicly funded, high-quality preschool system. It uses local and culturally relevant early child care and education programs and makes them available to children living at 200% of the federal poverty level.



Gomez

"We are excited for this opportunity for families of young children in our region and right now, we are working hard to get kids signed up," said Gomez, the coordinated enrollment specialist for the Blue Mountain Early Learning Hub.

Gomez helps fill vacancies in the 11 different Preschool Promise programs, known locally as Blue Mountain Kids, in Morrow, Umatilla and Union counties. Gomez said some of the local Preschool Promise programs are home-based and some are more traditional preschool classrooms.

"The program is also designed to support parents as partners in their child's learning and development, which is important for student success," Gomez said.

Launching a program like Preschool Promise would have been challenging under the best of circumstances, but during a worldwide pandemic has presented organizers with a myriad obstacles.

"That's been a little bit of the challenge of being fully enrolled in some locations, there's the complication of COVID, and then starting after the beginning of a school year, when a lot of times families already found care or a preschool of some kind," said Cade Burnette, co-director of Early Learning Services for the Blue Mountain Early Learning Hub. "I think we're fairly confi-

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Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

Retired Weston Middle School teacher John Bartron gives 17-year-old Bailey Munck some calming advice before the pair testified remotely for Senate Bill 649, known as Bailey's Bill, which increases penalties for criminal sexual contact with an underage victim when the defendant is the victim's teacher. Munck and Bartron testified from Pendleton on March 25, 2021.

## BAILEY'S BILL

Sen. Bill Hansell names bill after Athena teen abused by teacher

By KATHY ANEY  
East Oregonian

ATHENA — Bailey Munck steeled herself.

In a few short minutes, the 17-year-old Weston-McEwen High School student would testify to the Senate judiciary committee of the Oregon Legislature via video chat. Munck fought her nerves as she thought about the intensely personal information she was about to share with total strangers.

The testimony on March 25 would be in support of "Bailey's Bill," named after her. Sponsored by Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, and Sen. Kathleen Taylor, D-Milwaukie, the proposed legislation would increase penalties for criminal sexual contact with an underage victim if the defendant is the victim's teacher. Currently, a coach convicted of sexual abuse (in the third degree) receives harsher penalties than a teacher who commits the exact same crime.

When committee chairman Sen. Floyd Prozanski in Salem invited Munck to speak, she un-muted the laptop and began.

"Good morning Chairman Prozanski and Vice-Chairman (Kim) Thatcher and committee members," she began. "For the record, my name is Bailey Munck and I'm a senior at Weston-McEwen High School. In November of 2019 after the first state volleyball playoff game, I was sexually harassed by my English teacher."

### Enduring a teacher's inappropriate behavior

Munck's appearance at the hearing came after some difficult months. Now 17, she likely wishes she could go back in time and give her 16-year-old self some heartfelt advice, preferably before her teacher inched closer and closer to student-teacher boundaries and finally stepped over them on Nov. 2, 2019, the day Munck and the other Weston-McEwen volleyball players shut out Coquille 3-0 in a first-round state

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

Weston-McEwen's Bailey Munck (14) goes up for a shot against the Heppner Mustangs during a game in Athena on Jan. 3, 2020.

## Round-Up confident in a full 2021 rodeo

Rodeo organizers planning for full slate of events in September

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Pendleton Round-Up Association is projecting confidence in reviving its rodeo for 2021, but its board of directors isn't yet sharing details on how it plans to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pat Reay, the Round-Up's publicity director, said the association is planning for a full slate of events during the second full week of September. That means not just the rodeo, but also the kickoff concert, parades

and all the other spin-off events that come out of Round-Up week. The Round-Up signaled its confidence in March when it announced that Happy Canyon Arena would host the two-day Xtreme Bulls Tour Finale during Round-Up week.

"We're cautiously optimistic," Reay said.

The Round-Up will likely have some sort of safety plan to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 during the rodeo, but Reay said the event is too far out to share details on the plan. Other large events that have happened since the onset of the pandemic have included measures like mask requirements and temperature checks, but Reay said much could change



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

The stands sit empty and smoke hangs in the air at the Pendleton Round-Up Arena on Sept. 18, 2020, on what would have been the third day of the Pendleton Round-Up.

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