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## Student aid requests signal enrollment decline

Financial aid applications from prospective community college students down 44% from last year

By JEFF MANNING  
*The Oregonian*

PORTLAND — Students by the thousands appear to be steering clear of Oregon's public and

community colleges this fall.

Early figures suggest enrollment could be 5% lower this fall compared to a year ago, which itself was a historically bad year for Oregon higher education due to the pandemic. Through April, the state's public colleges had received the fewest financial aid applications since 2009, which administrators attributed to lingering concerns about the pandemic and the economic impact of the virus. "It's really scary," said Chuck

Knepfle, vice president of enrollment management at Portland State University, which is preparing for a 5% enrollment decline this fall on top of a 7% drop in the current year. The biggest drop for PSU has been from low-income families in the Portland area. "This pandemic has hit poor families really hard. I think there's some general frustration at the value of a college education."

The state's two highest-profile universities, the University of Oregon and Oregon State Univer-

sity, say they're doing fine. Oregon State said it's enjoying record numbers of applications.

The state's community colleges, on the other hand, may suffer the hardest blow. Financial aid applications from prospective community college students are down 44% from the same time last year.

Administrators had hoped that moving back to traditional in-person learning would lure back the thousands of gap-year students, high school graduates who took

the academic year off, as well as a normal load of incoming freshmen to enroll.

But while weeks remain before final enrollment deadlines, preliminary numbers indicate that a sizable number of potential students are apparently not ready to return. That means more financial struggles for colleges and uncertainty for a generation of college-age Oregonians and their families.

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## Opening homes to kids in need

Foster parents honored during National Foster Care Month

By JADE MCDOWELL  
*East Oregonian*

HERMISTON — For Bianca Osuna, being a foster parent is a dream come true.

"I know it sounds kind of cheesy, but I didn't dream of being a firefighter when I was growing up, I dreamed of being a mom," she said.

When Osuna didn't end up having biological children, she turned to the foster care system three years ago as a way to still provide a home for children. Her first placement — a set of four siblings — lasted about a year. The Umatilla resident has continued to care for other children since, and said she has enjoyed the "ever-learning" experience.

Many of the children who come into her home after a last-minute phone call from the Oregon Department of Human Services are coming from very difficult situations, such as homes with drugs and abuse. Osuna said she has had to learn a lot about parenting in a different way than the way she was raised.

"People think, 'How hard can it be? It's just babysitting,'" she said. "But it's not. It's retraining the brain from trauma."

Osuna has no regrets, however, about becoming what DHS now calls a "resource parent." Even her first experience, when she went from having no children to having four dropped off at a moment's notice, was a rewarding one she said she would do again. She enjoyed taking the kids around to their sports and other activities and spending time

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## 'I just feel really blessed'

Taekwondo studio holds fundraiser for child's chemotherapy

By BRYCE DOLE  
*East Oregonian*

STANFIELD — Audrey Bailey was overwhelmed with emotion at the sight of the crowd.

Dozens of taekwondo students gathered with their families and friends at Eastern Oregon Family Taekwondo in downtown Stanfield on Saturday, May 22, for a "break-a-thon" to raise funds in support of Bailey's daughter, Maysie, a 2-year-old girl from Hermiston who is undergoing treatment for brain cancer.

"I just feel really blessed," said Bailey, 23, holding her daughter outside the studio. "I just love knowing these people and it's inspiring to me and it's making me want to do more for others."

The event raised nearly \$15,000 for Maysie Bailey's upcoming chemotherapy treatment in Portland, according to Erwin Watson, the studio owner and lead instructor.

"We're just really thankful for the community coming together," said Drexlyn Bailey, Maysie's father, who is 24 and a plumber in Hermiston. "You just see that people have a good heart and that they want to help."

Students from the taekwondo studio during the past month were tasked with selling \$5 planks of wood, with the promise they would break with their bare hands each board they sold.

That culminated in the streets of downtown Stanfield as the drizzly morning gave way to sun. Families snapped photos and cheered while their children chopped down hard on hundreds of planks set between cinder blocks, at times wincing with pain when the plank wouldn't budge.



Bryce Dole/East Oregonian

Isaiah Medrano, 8, chops down on the wooden boards he sold to raise money for Maysie Bailey, a 2-year-old Hermiston girl who is undergoing treatment for brain cancer. Medrano and dozens of other students from Eastern Oregon Family Taekwondo broke hundreds of boards in the streets of Stanfield on Saturday, May 22, 2021.



Bryce Dole/East Oregonian

The Bailey family, from left: Maysie Bailey, 2; Audrey Bailey, 23; Drexlyn Bailey, 24; Joel Bailey, 4 months. Maysie Bailey finished up six weeks of radiation treatment in Seattle last week after she was diagnosed in February with a brain tumor. Now she begins a months-long process of chemotherapy in Portland. The event on Saturday, May 22, 2021, was a fundraiser for her upcoming treatment.

Members of the Bailey family stood nearby. Each expressed gratitude and surprise at the size of the gathering. Several shed tears while reflecting on the kindness of the people that came out

to support their family.

"It confirms that there's still some good in people," said Bill Bailey, Maysie's grandfather. "This shows there's good in the world that's worth fighting for."

### Months-long process of chemotherapy

The fundraiser was the third the studio has held in recent years, and the second for a child with cancer, Watson said. It began when Watson's daughter, who raised money for the Baileys through haircuts, proposed the idea to her father, prompting Watson to organize the fundraiser.

"It's good not to feel alone and have community around you when you're going through something like this," Audrey Bailey said.

After having most of her brain tumor removed through surgery in February, Maysie Bailey finished six weeks of radiation treatment in Seattle last week, the family said. Doctors told the family the treatment went very well, with some remarking she had been the best patient they had treated. She did not have to go through physical therapy and only lost a small patch of hair near the back of her head, the Baileys said.

"They said she would have

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## Fourth of July parade is revived for 2021

Veterans of Foreign Wars "Let 'er Buck" Post 922 canceled 2020 event due to pandemic

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
*East Oregonian*

PENDLETON — Pendleton's Fourth of July Parade is back this year, portending bigger things to come.

Veterans of Foreign Wars "Let 'er Buck" Post 922 recently announced it will stage a parade on Independence Day in 2021 after canceling its 2020 event due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the pandemic is ongoing, the state's restrictions on large events are starting to loosen. After a lost

summer for major events in Pendleton, organizer Fred Bradbury said the Fourth of July Parade will act as one of the city's first returning events this year, along with the recently revived Pendleton Whisky Music Fest.

The parade also has named VFW Commander Judith Burger its grand marshal.

In an interview, Burger said she agreed to hold the ceremonial role back in 2020. Back then, one of her fellow VFW members asked her for her resume, but she didn't ask what it would be used for.



Burger



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

Children rush to pick up candy thrown from parade floats during the 2019 Pendleton Fourth of July Parade.

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