

HOT OFF THE GRIDDLE FOR BREAKFAST WITH SANTA



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Seeley Hemphill offers up pancakes to guests Saturday, Dec. 18, 2021, at Pendleton Parks and Recreation's Breakfast with Santa at the Pendleton Recreation Center. The breakfast, prepared and served by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Let'er Buck Post 922, was a fundraiser for the department's youth scholarship fund.



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Madalyn Hutchison greets Santa Claus on Saturday, Dec. 18, 2021, during Breakfast with Santa at the Pendleton Recreation Center.

EOCI club raises \$5,000 for CAPECO

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Community Action Program of East Central Oregon in September received a \$5,000 donation from a club at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution, Pendleton.

The donation is a result of EOCI's Enrichment Club, according to a press release from the club via Ron Miles, supervising executive assistant at the medium-security prison. The club is a fundraising group consisting entirely of incarcerated men. The first club of its kind in the prison, its goal is to enrich the lives of the men in the facility, organize pro-social events and make donations to charitable causes, according to the press release.

The club in July coordinated a fundraiser partnering with Domino's Pizza. Nearly 1,200 pizzas were purchased during the event that allowed the donation to be made to CAPECO, which provides services to low income individuals in Eastern Oregon.

"CAPECO is a wonderful

organization that provides many services to struggling individuals. As a club we chose to make a donation to this organization because of the vast number of services they offer," club President Phillip Luna said in the release.

He also explained working with a local establishment such as Domino's was an important point.

"We understand that many businesses are struggling during this time," according to Luna, "and we wanted to make sure that a Pendleton business benefited from our fundraiser. We are grateful Domino's was willing to work with us, and we are hopeful that more establishments in the community will be willing to support EOCI fundraisers in the future."

The club was started in March stemming from a Department of Corrections initiative called the Oregon Way, a state-wide philosophical approach to corrections based on the belief that humanizing the prison environment is beneficial for employees and improves the outcome for incarcerated individuals.

The fundraising events in the institution create opportunities for positive interactions between security staff and the incarcerated, improving outcomes for incarcerated individuals.

In addition, the club challenges men housed at EOCI to extend empathy beyond a line of view that ends with a razor-wired chain link fence.

"In that sense, the Enrichment Club is more than just a fundraising group – it's an investment. It's an investment in empathy, in people, and in our communities," the press release stated.

The Enrichment Club has a government-like structure consisting of a general caucus and five leadership positions that are decided by election. Determining which fundraisers to pursue is a time-consuming process and each idea is scrutinized to ensure it meets all of the necessary criteria and furthers the goals of the Department of Corrections. Once a selection is made, the club leadership members work in tandem with correctional staff to plan the



Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution/Contributed Photo

Men of the Enrichment Club at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution, Pendleton, raised \$5,000 in September 2021 to donate to the Community Action Program of East Central Oregon.

event. The process is tedious, as the logistics of ordering and delivering within the institution can be challenging.

All club positions are voluntary; many of the club members have full-time work assignments in addition to time spent on club activities.

There are close to 1,600 incarcerated individuals at EOCI, and

the great majority will be released sometime in the future. In Oregon, life sentences constitute a small minority of the approximately 12,000 incarcerated individuals. This statistic, the press release stated, "validates the need for this type of club in a correctional setting as many of the men housed there will become part of a community in the future."

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