

Cycle Oregon details complete

By Caitlyn May
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The population of Cottage Grove will grow by one-quarter late this summer when Cycle Oregon coasts into town.

Approximately 2,500 individuals will ride 95 miles from Diamond Lake to settle into Cottage Grove for one day and, according to city manager Richard Meyers and chamber of commerce executive director Travis Palmer, many more after that.

"The key for this is to market them in a way that makes them want to come back," Travis said.

Bicyclists will not technically be inside Cottage Grove, instead opting to camp at Schwarz Park to prevent exceeding the daily limit of 100 miles placed on the event. However, Palmer is attempting to court individuals into city limits by exploring the option of having the chamber provide a shuttle service from the park to downtown Cottage Grove.

"We want to do things that will remind them, when they get home, that Cottage Grove is a great place to visit," said Meyers.

Cottage Grove residents will have plenty of opportunities to make an impression on the group. Both the chamber and the city are calling for volunteer groups to help with several aspects of the event including meal set-up and chair and table distribution.

"They roll into town with three semi-trucks," Meyers said. "We'll need groups to unload luggage and help set up camp."

Any service organization or other groups in town are welcome to apply to lend a hand during the event. While the positions are advertised as volunteer gigs, groups will be paid for their time. In the case of luggage handlers, Meyers said Cycle Oregon will pay \$1,500 to load, \$1,500 to unload and cyclists are free to tip. Meyers also noted that tips may be more than residents are used to saying, "The bike they're advertising that you can use for this ride is 50 percent off of \$7,000. These are the bikes some of the participants are riding."

"It's a chance for groups in town to make some money," Palmer said.

However, not all groups will be eligible to help in all areas. Palmer will hear pitches from groups based on what area they would like to take part in but the decision is ultimately based on which group can best handle which task.

"The boy scouts won't be picked to unload luggage. The bags weigh more than they do," Meyers said.

Applicants, according to Palmer, can apply at any time now that the information concerning Cycle Oregon's stay in Cottage Grove is in.

And while the opportunity to make money for local nonprofits and groups exists, Palmer and Meyers said the event is also an opportunity for Cottage Grove to put its best foot forward and attract future tourists.

"Whatever we can do to welcome them, that's what we want to do," Palmer said. "We want everyone to be their normal, friendly, Cottage Grove selves."



SLSD to follow OR rules for transgender students

By Caitlyn May
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The order by President Trump to withdraw protections for transgender students in public schools will not reach Oregon facilities.

This, according to Governor Kate Brown who reinforced the state's position made public in 2016 that calls for equal treatment of students regardless of their gender or gender identification.

"All kids are our top priority and we do everything we can to provide a safe and comfortable environment for students, including transgender students," said South Lane School District Superintendent Krista Parent.

The national debate surrounding the use of bathrooms by transgender students has been ongoing with several states attempting their own legislation.

Oregon law prohibits discrimination and according to the 2016 guidelines from the governor to school districts, "Oregon law broadly defines, 'sexual orientation' as an individual's actual or perceived heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality or gender identity, regardless of whether the individual's gender identity, appearance, expression or behavior differs from that traditionally associated with the individual's sex at birth."

The governor's order also cites federal law, Title IX which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in federally funded programs. "The U.S. Departments of Education and Justice have stated that under Title IX, 'discrimination based on a person's gender identity, a person's transgender status, or a person's nonconformity to sex stereotypes constitutes discrimination based on sex,'" the order reads, "and has asserted a significant interest in ensuring that all students, including transgender students, have the opportunity to learn in an environment free of sex discrimination in public schools."

The state of Oregon issued groundbreaking directives last year when the state's department of education called for transgender students to be permitted to play sports on the gender team with which they identify, be called by the name they wished and wear the clothes they wanted, including females having the ability to wear tuxedos to prom.

While Oregon officials assured residents that state law protects students despite the federal rollback of rights, no issue concerning the matter has gone before a court to render a decision which could either clarify or diminish states' rights.

Currently, students at South Lane schools have the option of using the bathroom they identify with or a private use bathroom.

"We haven't had transgender kids at every school in the district but at the schools we have, we see what the range of options are," Parent said. "We include the student, the parents and the administration to figure out what the options are and what they feel most comfortable with."

"Gang bathrooms" are what could be described as traditional-use facilities that hold several stalls. Students are free to use these bathrooms in accordance to their gender identification. However, the option to use private-use, one-stall facilities is also available for any student, not just transgender students, within the South Lane School District.

New school construction took into account the issue as well with the new Harrison Elementary School designed with private restrooms in addition to traditional facilities.

"The bottom line is," Parent said, "that the directive we've been given from the Oregon Department of Education and the governor's office is that the federal action does not change Oregon guidelines."

Chamber needs volunteers

Six volunteers needed to help monitor the finish-line beer garden at the Cottage Grove Half-Marathon. Must be at least 21 years of age. The event will take place on Saturday, March 11th in Cottage Grove. Volunteers will be needed from approximately 8am til Noon and (if they sign up early enough) will receive an Oakshire Brewing T-shirt. Contact Emily Rinck at 541-942-8770 or in person at the Brew Station/Coast Fork Feed Company.

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