

Summer reading in South Lane



PHOTO BY ZACH SILVA/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

Summer Reading Spots volunteer Hailie Intros reads to a group of kids during the program.

South Lane School District and United Way team up to keep students sharp all year long

By Zach Silva
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Armed with the knowledge that reading is the key to creating smart and engaged students and citizens, United Way of Lane County and the South Lane School District brought the Summer Reading Spots program to Cottage Grove.

The goal of this program is to improve kindergarten and elementary school aged kids reading literacy. By getting students to read throughout the summer the hope is that they will then be prepared for school come fall.

"Our overarching goal is to provide some opportunities for kids and families during the summer around literacy to prevent summer learning loss," said United Way Lane County's vice president of community impact Holly Mar Conte. This goal works "right along with ensuring that kids enter kindergarten ready to learn."

This is the fifth year of this program in Cottage Grove and it now is at three locations: Bohemia Elementary School, Harrison Elementary School and the Dorena Post Office. This summer, in the first week of the program, over 100 children were at these locations in the first week. At each location, Food for Lane County offers free summer meals and at the conclusion of the meal the reading programs begin.

The key incentive of the reading program is that each time a child attends they receive a free book, some of which are in Spanish, of their choice. Over the last year, through the help of various community sponsors United Way brought

in over 1,400 books to be used for the program.

The reading program is specifically working to get books in the hands of students who are below the poverty level. According to statistics from United Way and the South Lane School District, two thirds of children living below the poverty line do not have books in the home. That statistic paired with the fact that 50 percent of South Lane families with children under five are below the poverty level created a need for a program that promotes reading.

"When you have a super harried family where parents might be working multiple minimum wage jobs they don't have time to take their child to the library, story hour or sit down and read to them every night," said Jackie Lester who is the former Bohemia Elementary School principal and current P-20 Outreach Coordinator for South Lane. "Kids are coming in requiring a lot of support...as they make it to kindergarten."

Lester sees the strength of the program is in how it can go and help these students get to the reading level they need to be at. This manifests itself at each reading location when students show up and have a great variety of books to choose from. Then for the next hour they get the chance to read aloud with volunteers who range from middle school students to retired teachers.

"The kids really enjoy it and they love being read to," said Cheri Jensen who regularly brings her daycare kids to the program. "They look forward to coming to lunch and getting their book. It's definitely a highlight for them."

The program runs until August 24th.

House Bill addresses traffic stops

By Caitlyn May
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House Bill 2355 passed both houses of the Oregon Legislature and landed on Governor Kate Brown's desk for her signature before becoming law earlier this month. Its purpose? To help better track interaction between law enforcement and the public as well as stem possible discriminatory practices based on race and gender.

The bill, carried by Sen. Jackie Winters, R-Salem, requires that law enforcement collect data regarding a person's age, race and gender during an officer initiated traffic stop.

The Oregon Criminal Justice Commission, the agency in charge of implementing the new law, and the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training have until July 2018 to develop a reporting method for the data and train officers on the street on how to properly engage with residents while executing the chosen method.

"This procedure will certainly increase the time needed for person and vehicle stops, as there will have to be a separate document completed to record all the required information," said Captain Conrad Gagner of the Cottage Grove Police Department. "Officers will need to carry in their vehicles/patrol bags an additional stock of whatever forms are decided on by the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission." He also noted that officers who stop pedestrians do not have to document the encounter in accordance to the law unless the resident is cited, arrested or searched. Vehicle stops must be documented in all cases.

"Based on the number of law enforcement officers Cottage Grove employs, CGPD must begin recording this information no later than July 1, 2020. We then must begin reporting this data to the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission no later than July 1, 2021, and annually thereafter," Gagner said.


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