

# Roots of Empathy to grow in SLSD

The empathy-based program is part of 90by30's goal of reducing abuse

By Caitlyn May  
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Last October, the members of 90by30 walked away from a conference in awe. They'd had a private session with the founder and creator of Roots of Empathy, Mary Gordon.

The program, an international organization that offers empathy-based programs for children based on researched results, is set to hit South Lane School District next school year and 90by30 had gotten a sneak peek.

"Just meeting her, we were so lucky," said Rachel Nordquist, a coordinator for 90by30.

Nordquist, along with Mary Nisewander and others from 90by30, have been working on implementing the program

after being selected by the organization to take part in the hands-on learning opportunity.

Roots of Empathy is designed for children between the ages of five and 13 but will be implemented in second-grade classrooms in South Lane and has a very special component: a baby.

Infants who are between the ages of two and four months at the start of the school year are assigned to a classroom and make several visits throughout the year. The aim of the partnership between the infant and students is to foster a learning of emotional literacy and empathy. A separate curriculum is taught during the week without the presence of the baby in the classroom and teachers can, likewise, draw on the baby's visit to reaffirm those lessons in the weeks between visits.

A certified instructor helps walk the class and the teacher through each lesson

and is always present when the infant is in the classroom — something that can only happen through a volunteer effort.

"That's the first thing we get asked," Nordquist said. "How does a baby do in a classroom with second-graders and germs? But there's never been a problem."

The local program is looking for volunteers with infants and those who would like to become certified instructors.

"It's a commitment," said Nisewander of the certified instructor program. "If an instructor cannot continue, the teacher cannot just take over. That program moves out of that classroom."

Volunteers must submit to a background check and adhere to the school district's policies on volunteers.

"We're going to go through our baby box list but, yes, we need volunteers," Nordquist said.

Roots of Empathy is part of 90by30's broader goal of decreasing child abuse and neglect by 90 percent by the year 2030. Earlier this year, the group launched baby boxes that provided parents of newborns with essential supplies such as diapers and informational DVDs explaining shaken baby syndrome. The boxes also contained handmade blankets and booties.

According to Roots of Empathy, after completing the curriculum, children have shown an increase in social and emotional knowledge, a decrease in aggression and an increase in sharing, helping and including others.

Instructor training will take place on August 28, 29 and 30 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Lane ESD offices in Eugene.

For more information or to volunteer an infant or to be an instructor, contact Rachel Nordquist at racheln@90by30.com.



## Pet tips 'N' tales

By Mary Ellen  
"Angel Scribe"

### Max-a-Million dollar baby

Meg's heart of gold led her to rescuing cats for 40 years. She's taken in distressed, lost and elderly kitties. "All cats need to be cared for and loved," said Meg. "The resulting, rewarding, reciprocated love and appreciation are remarkable."

Nine years ago, Meg awoke to a skinny grey-and-white tuxedo cat sitting on her patio chair.

"After work, my unexpected guest was still lounging on 'his' chair blinking and winking at me," said Meg. "In case he belonged to another family, I did not feed him. Was he choosing me for his new family? On the fourth day, when he drank from a rain puddle, I couldn't stand it. So I served him fresh water and cat food and contacted the humane society."

Meg learned from his ID chip that a senior woman, Marjorie, had been feeding feral (wild/homeless) cats in her neighborhood. During her lifetime, 90-year-old Marjorie had trapped 150 cats for the society to neuter and spay preventing a further explosion of starving kittens from becoming food for larger animals or injured from vehicles.

As it turned out, the ladies had known each other!

"I was once her care aid," said Meg. "Sadly, she had passed but, thankfully, her grandson adopted her 'feed the feral' program. His grandmother is surely smiling on him from heaven. When I showed him 'my' cat's picture he proclaimed, 'That's Regent! He is 4-years-old. He is so lucky to find a home.'"

Meg was ecstatic! She emotionally needed this "lil' friendly creature" because three weeks purr-eviously her elderly cat died, and two weeks later her husband. This cat was a heart-healing gift from above and its timely arrival qualified



Meg and her cat, Max-a-Million Kat

it for a new name.

Meg named her gift, "Mr. Max-a-Million Kat, shortened to 'Max' because he is my priceless baby worth a million dollars," said Meg.

In gratitude, Max meowed appreciation for his name and licked her arm. A habit that he continues to this day.

Max never again left Meg's yard.

"He loves sleeping under my bushes and springing out to chase lawn moths," said Meg. "He still thinks he is a kitten. Now, when he jumps up, his round jelly-belly jiggles like Santa's and it makes me giggle."

Last winter, Meg left on her first vacation in four decades. Her son, Kevin, stayed with Max, so the cat would not experience separation anxiety. It did not work!

"While I was away, my cat cried constantly for me while searching the house," said Meg. "Then, he did not leave my bed except to eat and shortly after, he quit eating. In desperation, Kevin put the phone up to Max's ear. When Max heard my voice, he revved up his crying and howling. He was miserable until I got home and then he attached himself to me like Velcro. He was cuddly before, but now he constantly lays on my feet or chest and under the bed covers. I am enjoying his extra cuddling and affection! I'll always be grateful that Marjorie sent me Max and he's made it clear how much he loves me; paws-ibly a whisker more than my love for him."

**Tips:**

When Meg first let the terrified feral into her home, he hid under her bed, but she had a plan: "I put a cat-irresistible open brown grocery bag on the floor knowing that he'd venture out and into the bag, which he did, and then he surprisingly began playing," said Meg. "Once he had enough of the bag, he searched and sniffed his way around the house. It wasn't long before he felt at home. I couldn't believe how quickly he adapted! To tame him, I purr-servered by gently picking him up for a moment at a time. In the end, he is the cuddliest cat I ever adopted ... errr who adopted me."

Share your fun, amazing or crazing pet tips and tales at [angelscribe@msn.com](mailto:angelscribe@msn.com) or Follow Pet Tips 'n' Tales on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/PetTipsandTales](http://www.facebook.com/PetTipsandTales). Adopt loving pets online at [www.PetFinder.com](http://www.PetFinder.com).

For spay or neutering, call the Humane Society at 541-942-2789.

## Vaccination rates low in Lane County, report says

Report from OHA finds Lane County childcare facilities fall short

By Caitlyn May  
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The latest data from the Oregon Health Authority reports that child care facilities in Lane County qualify as "most vulnerable" concerning the percentage of students who have received all required vaccinations.

Grades K-12 were marked as "moderately vulnerable."

The report, released earlier this month, classifies districts with less than 80 percent of its students vaccinated as most vulnerable and districts with

less than 95 percent of its students vaccinated at moderately vulnerable.

Lane County child care

all of the immunizations required by the state of Oregon.

Those immunizations include DTap, Polio, Varicella,

or medical exemptions do not have to be vaccinated.

Parents claiming a non-medical exemption must complete an E-module online, available on the state's website, that feature information about immunizations and the spread of contagious diseases.

The Cottage Grove area did not have a school illustrated on the state's information map that fell into the "safest" category with at least 95 percent of its students vaccinated.

However, several areas in Lane County overall were marked in the category.

Neighboring counties, Roseburg and Linn, both had areas in the "safest" category as well but scored slightly lower than Lane overall.

While some students who do not receive all of the required vaccinations have received exemptions, accessibility to health care can also result in lower vaccination rates.

The Family Resource Center and Peggy's Primary Connection in Cottage Grove is planning a vaccination clinic this fall. Parents who are unsure if they qualify for the Oregon Health Plan or have questions can call Peggy's Primary Connection at 541-942-4967.

MMR, Hepatitis B and A and Hib.

Kindergarten through 12 grade in the county reported 94 percent of students had been vaccinated.

South Lane School District lists its vaccination policy on its website which states, "By law, shots are required for children in attendance at public and private schools, preschools, childcare facilities and HeadStart programs."

Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) .267 requires full immunizations for contagious diseases.

According to the state of Oregon, children with religious

facilities — institutions that care for children prior to kindergarten — showed 78 percent of children had received

**"By law, shots are required for children in attendance at public and private schools, preschools, childcare facilities and HeadStart programs."**

— South Lane School District policy

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<p><b>THURSDAY</b> 78°   52° <b>Partly Sunny</b></p>	<p><b>FRIDAY</b> 78°   51° <b>Mostly Sunny</b></p>
<p><b>SATURDAY</b> 80°   50° <b>Sunny</b></p>	<p><b>SUNDAY</b> 84°   50° <b>Sunny</b></p>
<p><b>MONDAY</b> 75°   46° <b>Mostly Sunny</b></p>	<p><b>TUESDAY</b> 73°   46° <b>Partly Cloudy</b></p>

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