

HEALTH *from A1*

world learning and training for local high school and college students interested in health care careers, adding a CTE (Career and Technical Education) component to the project.

“The partnership with the school district and with Lane Community College is unique in that we’ll be able to do on-site career technical education, support, and really create pathways to improve our workforce,” said Gaffney.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic put a strain on the healthcare workforce, countrywide shortage concerns had been a long-standing issue.

A lengthy list of programs and services are planned for the center including pediatrics, family planning, alternative medical services,

integrated oral health care, behavioral health, pharmacist consultations and maternal and child health programs.

There are currently no plans to physically expand LCC to incorporate it all, however. The project instead is committing about two-thirds of the existing square footage to remodel the building into a health center and leaving the remaining to be used for classrooms and other LCC space.

On Aug. 19, local leaders including Congressman Peter DeFazio toured the building. DeFazio spoke to the crowd prior to the tour.

“The community health centers across the country are, I think, one of the best federal programs that’s been created in a very, very long time,” said DeFazio, who advocated for the establishment of the county’s

Riverstone Clinic as well. “We can do community health centers, we can improve people’s lives, the outcomes, we can get to them early before it becomes an acute issue, and we save money.”

While the project has slowly but gradually been gathering funds for development, \$1.5 million secured by DeFazio earlier this year will put the project within reach of its goal.

With an oral health clinic, the total estimated budget for the community health center is around \$3.8 million. This April, project representatives reported that some \$1.8 million was still needed before construction could begin.

Defazio’s \$1.5 million is currently in the appropriations process and will have to wait until it is passed by Congress, possibly this October.

When all funds are raised, the architectural and construction phase will begin, which is estimated to take between eight and 10 months total. The goal is open doors sometime next year.

The South Lane community ranks among the top two of Oregon’s highest need primary care services areas, as identified by the Office of Rural Health. The area is also designated as a “health professional shortage area” for primary and dental care by the Health Resources and Services Administration.

“This is one of the most underserved areas for health care in the state of Oregon,” said DeFazio, highlighting the issue. “Lack of primary care and availability for people means that most of them wait till they’re really sick. And then they go to the emergency room. That

costs a lot more, it’s less effective. Early intervention could have prevented the disease from developing to something that is going to be really harmful. ... So ultimately, it saves money for families, for taxpayers, and it gives better health outcomes to have this clinic and regular access to a primary care doctor.”

The new community health center in Cottage Grove is estimated to be able to provide access to primary care services for more than 5,000 patients in the community and surrounding area with four primary care practitioners at capacity.

During a presentation to the Cottage Grove City Council in April, representatives of the project said that approximately a quarter of Cottage Grove residents and almost half of families with children un-

der five live below the federal poverty line.

As well as providing services and technical education locally, it’s hoped the health center will have a positive economic impact by introducing opportunities for higher wage jobs, providing relief from indigent care spending (South Lane Mental Health spends up \$250,000 to \$300,000 annually) and keeping thousands of residents using FQHC sites local rather than making trips to the Eugene/Springfield area.

DeFazio praised the community’s collaboration in seeing the project become realized.

“We don’t have a lot of that going on these days as it relates to healthcare in this country, but it is a day to celebrate for this community and for the people of the surrounding area,” he said.

COVID-19 *from A1*

your immediate household.

• Carry masks and hand sanitizer with you when leaving home and wash your hands as often as possible.

• Avoid crowded public spaces, whether in or outdoors.

• Avoid unnecessary business or leisure travel.

• Respect other’s space and maintain at least 6 feet distance from others.

• Limit activities that could lead to injuries re-

quiring hospital care.

• If you are an unvaccinated adult, stay home and avoid public interactions as much as possible.

• Get vaccinated.

FOR BUSINESSES

• Ensure indoor masking consistent with previous LCPH advisories and Governor Brown’s masking order.

• Ensure outdoor masking for those older than five years of age (two and older if tolerated) — regardless of vaccination status — when in outdoor public spaces in which six feet of distance cannot be consistently maintained.

• Limit capacity to facilitate social distancing, particularly when customers will be eating and drinking without masks.

• Prominently post appropriate signage to remind customers to ob-

serve COVID-19 safe practices.

• Prominently post signage about the vaccination status of your business and staff.

PUBLIC VENUE OWNERS, OPERATORS, AND PERMITTING AUTHORITIES

While peer-reviewed evidence of outdoor transmission risks associated with the Delta Variant of SARS-CoV-2 is incomplete, Lane County Public Health (LCPH) says it believes that the safest strategy is to avoid public events greater than 200 people indoors and outdoors for at least the next two weeks.

LCPH advises to strongly consider postponing events until a later date when transmission risk is reduced. If this is not possible, LCPH recommends

taking the following steps to limit the spread.

• Require indoor and outdoor masking, regardless of vaccination status.

• Consider requiring proof of vaccination for entry.

• Consider capacity limits to facilitate distancing, whether in or out of doors.

• Provide ample sanitation stations for hand-washing.

• Consider entrances, exits, and other areas where people tend to cluster — ensure that attendees have room to queue that facilitates spacing. Use signage and staff to remind people to maintain distance and use masking, indoors and outdoors.

• Consider touchless vending options, if possible.

• Prominently post appropriate signage to remind customers to observe COVID-19 safe practices; reinforce via public address announcements throughout the event.

EMPLOYERS


• Ensure that employees follow public health measures outlined above.

• Encourage remote tele-work for employees for whom this is possible.

• Ensure that workplaces can facilitate distancing where possible.

• Limit unnecessary travel for employees.

To learn more about COVID-19 and vaccination efforts in Oregon, visit healthoregon.org/coronavirus and covidvaccine.oregon.gov, as well as lanecounty.org/coronavirus and lanecounty.org/vax-clinics.



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