

SCHOOL *from A1*

"I am just so blessed to be in a building of staff that have just opened up and are ready to wrap around our youth and provide support and whatever they're going to need this year," said Tammy Sandefur, assistant principal at Cottage Grove High School. "It's going to be a great year."

New masking, sanitation and distancing policies are in place to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Educator and administrator accounts at the meeting seemed to point to a general adherence to these policies.

Still, the year hasn't started without challenges.

For one, there are positions remaining to be filled in the district.

While the district has hired an unprecedented number of licensed and classified staff members this year, there are still 14 positions listed open on the district website.

The Human Resources department has reported it is looking to hire more licensed staff specifically to support the mental and behavioral health and social emotional development of students, such as school psychologists and counselors.

As for the state of staff themselves, representatives from education worker associations provided the school board with an update last week.

Brenda McClean, co-president of the South Lane classified employees union and librarian at Bohemia Elementary School, starting by thanking administrative staff for wage corrections initiated this year.

"We can't tell you how



BY DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

Staff at SLSD reported being delighted to finally welcome students back into buildings.

much this means to all of us and to all of our families," she said. "It has given us an infusion of hope, a reason to believe that better days are ahead."

However, she added, more work was needed to address other permanent positions which may be underpaid.

In addition, the vaccine mandate has created a staffing crisis, she said.

On Aug. 19, Governor Kate Brown announced that all adults in K-12 school campus communities and all health care workers must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by Oct. 18.

The education requirement applies to teachers, educators, support staff and volunteers at the state's K-12 schools, though exemption can be made based on health or religious grounds.

"So we face the next couple of months with a heavy

mix of emotions," said McClean. "It is an absolute joy, though, to have the students all back in the school. And as always, we will be doing whatever is possible to keep them safe and help them to be successful."

A representative of South Lane Education Association, which represents the certified employees of South Lane School District, echoed that staff seemed to be very pleased with the return to in-person learning.

"Where we are right now, it sounds like everyone is really putting in 100 percent to make sure that we are abiding by the guidelines and doing what we need to do to enable the in-person learning, which I, on a personal level, can just say after a single day is so much better than CDL," he said, referring to the Comprehensive Distance Learning strategy employed last school year.

"And I don't want to disregard all the hard work that went into CDL, but it's a transformative experience. And we just want to continue to work on keeping everyone safe and making sure that voices are heard."

SLSD Superintendent Yvonne Curtis reported that the first few days seemed to be going smoothly, though there were some challenges in transportation as the district started out short six bus drivers and experienced a system crash. Routes also had to be shifted as not all student transportation was covered effectively at the outset.

Besides other minor challenges regarding the segue into the new school year, COVID has offered its own obstacles.

"It's important for the board to know that we are being impacted by COVID," said Curtis, reporting that, as of Sept. 13, there were

around 13 people affected by COVID and a larger number in quarantine.

It was not specified if the affected people were staff or students, though the quarantined people were said to have simply been in the presence of someone who tested positive.

"But we are going to start publishing the total number who have COVID," said Curtis.

As of *The Sentinel's* press time, no new numbers have been released.

Over the past week, Curtis was scheduled to meet with other Lane County superintendents to develop strategies for a year which will potentially see a slump in educator positions.

The South Lane district has sent two rounds of surveys to its staff, hoping to gain insight into who is already vaccinated, planning to get vaccinated or may be asking for an exception by the Oct. 18 deadline.

As of last week, around 40 staff had applied for exceptions and some had already been approved, Curtis said, adding that guidelines would have to be reviewed in order to create situations which could protect the unvaccinated and others around them.

A handful of staff members have also indicated they would not be getting the vaccine for various reasons including maternity leave and finding other jobs, Curtis said.

SLSD is offering options for coaches, volunteer coaches and substitutes as well.

"Many school districts are not allowing people who are not vaccinated to serve in those roles," said Curtis. "We are extending them the same opportunity for exceptions because we want to maintain as much of our programming as we can."

SLSD did not respond to requests for an interview for this article.

Visit us on **the web**

CGSENTINEL.COM



CGSENTINEL

Speak your peace.
Write a Letter to the Editor.
Editor@CGSentinel.com



ENGLERT LeafGuard®
is the permanent, clog-free gutter solution!*

*Guaranteed not to clog for as long as you own your home, or we will clean your gutters for free




LeafGuard
16 YEARS BACKED BY THE SEAL



PLUS

RECEIVE A \$25 AMAZON GIFT CARD
WITH FREE IN-HOME ESTIMATE!**



\$99

INSTALLATION

541-213-2311

CALL TODAY FOR YOUR FREE ESTIMATE!

- THE ONLY ONE-PIECE SEAMLESS DEBRIS SHEDDING GUTTER SYSTEM.
- SCRATCHGUARD® PAINT FINISH
- LIFETIME NO-CLOG WARRANTY
- MADE ONSITE SPECIFICALLY FOR YOUR HOME



This promotion assumes an estimated job cost of \$7883. Does not include cost of material. Expires 9/30/2021. All participants who attend an estimated 60-90 minute in-home product consultation will receive a \$25 gift card. Retail value is \$25. Offer sponsored by LeafGuard Holdings Inc. Limit one per household. Company procures, sells, and installs seamless gutter protection. This offer is valid for homeowners over 18 years of age. If married or involved with a life partner, both cohabitating persons must attend and complete presentation together. Participants must have a photo ID, be able to understand English, and be legally able to enter into a contract. The following persons are not eligible for this offer: employees of Company or affiliated companies or entities, their immediate family members, previous participants in a Company in-home consultation within the past 12 months and all current and former Company customers. Gift may not be extended, transferred, or substituted except that Company may substitute a gift of equal or greater value if it deems it necessary. Gift card will be mailed to the participant via first class United States Mail or e-mailed within 30 days of receipt of the promotion form. Not valid in conjunction with any other promotion or discount of any kind. Offer not sponsored or promoted by Amazon and is subject to change without notice prior to reservation. 9/30/2021. LeafGuard operates as LeafGuard of Oregon in Oregon under license number 223377

NORTH AMERICA'S

#1 Walk-In Tub

NOW with an Exclusive
NEW Shower Package!



Now you can have the best of both worlds—there isn't a better, more affordable walk-in tub!

- ✓ First and only walk-in tub available with a customizable shower
- ✓ Fixed rainfall shower head is adjustable for standing or sitting
- ✓ Durable frameless tempered glass enclosure available
- ✓ High-quality tub complete with a comprehensive lifetime warranty
- ✓ Top-of-the-line installation and service, all included at one low price

EXCLUSIVE OFFER!

\$1500 OFF

on a Walk-in Tub with this Limited Time Offer*

LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEE. FOR DETAILS CALL TODAY!



541-238-9737

FINANCING AVAILABLE WITH APPROVED CREDIT

CSLB 983603 F13000002885 13HV08744300