

Community Sharing Warming Shelter prepares for winter service

During its meeting last week, the Beds for Freezing Nights board decided to not open its warming service again this year and asked that the pallet shelters be used instead.

The Community Sharing Warming Shelter was established in January this year to make use of the pallet shelters when nights dip to 29 degrees Fahrenheit or below.

The collaborative program replaced Cottage Grove's previous sheltering service for the homeless during freezing nights.

The site has a stated seasonal opening period from Nov. 1 to March 31.

Community Sharing and city staff are partnering to prepare the warming shelter facility for this winter's opening. To open, volunteers are needed to assist with the operation of the warming shelters.

Anyone interested in volunteering can contact Community Sharing at 541-942-2176 or the Community Center at 541-942-1185.

City Hall closes for “Destruction Day”

Umpqua Public Transportation District (UPTD) has started a new bus route called the Lane-Douglas Connector (LDC).

This new service offers safe, reliable, accessible transportation to veterans and the general public in rural communities for better access to healthcare services and shopping opportunities.

Lane-Douglas Connector

operates from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays with scheduled stops at the Veterans Affairs Hospital in Roseburg, Ray's Food in Drain, Walmart and PeaceHealth Medical Center in Cottage Grove, and the Veterans Affairs Clinic in Eugene (LTD bus stop nearby).

The stop in Drain serves as a connection point for passengers of the North

Douglas Betterment shuttle.

The route is operated by South Lane Wheels as a pilot project funded by the Rural Veterans Healthcare Transportation grant.

For service information and timetable go to: www.southlanetransit.com, or to schedule a ride, call UPTD dispatch toll-free at 888-232-8121.

SLSD *from AI*

exemptions were approved among sports staff as well, but “we haven't even started on the coaches and volunteers for the next season of sports,” said Curtis.

Five of the 11 who initially said they would not comply have now decided to start vaccinations and several are on track be vaccinated by the Oct. 18 deadline. Two others have opted to request exceptions, another two are on leave and one resigned, reportedly due to a desire to homeschool their children.

The final staff member of the 11 had not stated their intention as of Monday's board meeting due to being out sick.

Curtis said she has made sure to meet with all staff members who are asking for exemptions and attributed the changing of their opinions to principals and department supervisors closely listening to concerns and answering questions, a quality other school districts in the area may lack as they adopt “no exception” and other less accommodating strategies for dealing with unvaccinated staff.

“My goal the entire time is, of course, to make sure that everyone's healthy and safe,” said Curtis. “And so we've been watching our COVID [cases] and to see what spread we had, even though we had some people unvaccinated in our system.”

SLSD reportedly has no COVID spread in schools, she said, “so we felt like we didn't have to do what some districts around us are doing.”

As of last week, there were 23 students who had been confirmed as testing positive.

Quarantines have also been in effect for some a as a precautionary measure.

The Cottage Grove football team recently canceled its homecoming game scheduled for this Friday (Oct. 8). The team was quarantined following “someone in the football program” contracting COVID, said Athletic Director Garrett Bridgens.

Bridgens did not verify whether the case involved staff or students.

“We've been relatively healthy compared to some of the stories I'm hearing in other school districts,” said Curtis, adding that, except for a few isolated incidents, the district seems to be upholding its safety agreements.

For those who remain unvaccinated, Oregon Health Authority and Oregon Department of Education recommend special protocols to add more layers of protection measures after the Oct. 18 deadline.

Among measures, unvaccinated workers will be asked to wear KN95 masks, participate in a weekly screening program, sanitize common areas and to eat alone inside the building.

Outdoor tables have been made available for colleagues to eat together.

Unvaccinated staff have expressed concern around the weekly screening, however, as it requires sharing personal information. The school district is continuing to work with staff members to find solutions on this point.

Following its first month of adjustment back to in-person schooling, the district is also likely to start tightening up its rules on safety protocols, which includes mask-wearing and social distancing.

Curtis noted that compassion will be a key fac-

tor in navigating the road ahead. She said speaking with those hesitant to take the vaccine illuminated understandable concerns.

“Some of them were real issues that I would have concerns with, too — family members who had blood clots from the vaccination — well, that might make me pretty hesitant, too. So, I understand some of those,” she said. “In the end, we're all human and we're all trying to navigate this very unpredictable time that keeps changing. ... I think as people get their questions answered, and more time goes by, people are getting more comfortable with the vaccination.”

Those volunteers and staff who have not met requirements by Oct. 18 but intend on complying will be put on unpaid leave and will remain so until they come into compliance.

As with many other districts, maintaining staff will be a concern this year.

New hires and temps are already on their way as some schools such as Harrison Elementary have seen turnover.

In particular, drivers remain a critical staffing issue. Not only is the district down by six drivers, some have had to quarantine.

“And we really need all

of them,” Curtis said. “We have everybody driving that can possibly be driving.”

Still, Curtis said she felt SLSD is doing better than other districts which are telling parents they can no longer transport kids.

One idea for addressing staffing problems capitalizes on the fact that bigger districts are not allowing for certain vaccine exceptions.

Curtis suggested to the board on Monday that staff who have been let go by those districts may be available for hire at SLSD, but it will depend on if the district can offer exceptions for new hires after the deadline passes. The district will wait for legal counsel before making a decision on that front.

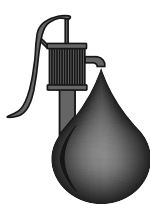
In the meantime, SLSD is also putting focus on the needs of students.

Part of the district's education strategy this year revolves around “rigorous learning.”

“To ensure that rigorous learning is making a difference, we want to be looking at student work and student accomplishment and student data,” said Curtis. “And the strategy we're developing around that is creating professional learning communities.”

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