



Luis Garcias, 13, reads to his sister Saide, 4, while brother Ivan, 6, looks through his own book.

EMILY MENTZER/Itemizer-Observer

Would you like a book with that?

Burgerville family literacy event is tonight with books and free kids cones

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — Burgerville conjures images of Tillamook cheeseburgers and rosemary shoestring potatoes with hazelnut chocolate shakes — all locally sourced in the Pacific Northwest.

Now, the Monmouth location will be synonymous with literacy. The first of what organizers hope will be a monthly Literacy Night at Burgerville is Wednesday (today).

"Literacy is very important," said Colleen Spencer, Burgerville team manager, who organized the event. "It's been in my heart to have families come together."

Spencer comes from a background in early childhood education and work-

Tonight enjoy a book and cone

What: Burgerville Literacy Night.
Where: 615 E. Main St., Monmouth.
When: 5:30 to 7 p.m., Wednesday (today).
Admission: Free.

Of note: Kids cones will be given out free, in addition to some books, donated by Goodwill. Kids meals will be \$2 off. The event is a collaboration between Burgerville, Monmouth Public Library, Western Oregon University and Mid-Valley Parenting.

ing with families before joining the Burgerville team three years ago. General Manager Robert Henry was open to the idea of hosting the night filled with activities geared toward improving overall literacy of the community.

"Literacy can be developed between different activities," Spencer said.

Gardening with children, cooking with children — any activity where there are di-

rections to read and discussions to have can improve and encourage literacy, she said.

The evening is in collaboration with Monmouth Public Library and Goodwill, who will donate books to give out on the night. Monmouth Public Library will have volunteers and librarians there to read with kids and hand out literacy resources such as reading lists and coloring sheets.

"It's a nice way to meet people in the community and support literacy in a different way outside the walls of the library," said Carrie Kasperick, children's librarian in Monmouth.

Paper will be on every table so families and children may write their story, tell a story, write a letter or song, Spencer said.

"There's fun ways to do something simple for families to create literacy," she said.

Burgerville will supply coupons and free kids cones, as well as the space to gather and explore literacy.

Henry said he is looking forward to giving Burgerville the chance to be more involved in its community besides its fundraising partnerships, which raised \$13,000 last year for more than two dozen organizations.

New bill to limit fifth-year programs

Law will track enrollment costs

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — A bill written to allow school districts to retain fifth-year programs for students not eligible for other community college opportunities is working its way through the Oregon Senate.

The Senate Interim Committee on Education sent Senate Bill 1537 for a floor vote following a work session on Feb. 10. SB 1537 would allow Dallas, Central and Falls City's partnership with Chemeketa Community College to continue, but just for those students who can't participate in the Oregon Promise program.

Oregon Promise students need to have a cumulative grade-point average of 2.5 in high school, have accepted all federal grants or scholarships to pay for tuition and pay \$50 per term as a co-payment.

Through the program, the state has set aside \$10 million to provide grants of at least \$1,000 to cover any remaining costs, including books, transportation and other expenses.

In the 2015 legislative session, Oregon Promise was introduced as a replacement for fifth-year programs developed by 26 school districts across the state that used K-12 state school money to pay for costs.

Senate Bill 322 was introduced to phase out those programs, but stalled after outcry from students, parents and school officials touting the benefits for students in smaller or rural districts.

Instead, a committee was formed to find a compromise that would allow the programs to continue but reduce the financial impact

to the state's K-12 fund. SB 1537 is that compromise.

Brian Green, the administrator of Dallas' fifth-year program Extended Campus, served on the committee. His most pressing concern was exclusion of students who didn't meet the GPA requirement.

"In looking at the data, I went back five years to see the impact that Oregon Promise would have on our Extended Campus, and in the five years, there were 97 students who would not have been able to participate," Green said.

That group included students who stumbled out of the gate in their freshman or sophomore years, but finished high school strong.

He added many of those 97 students performed better in college than they did at DHS.

If passed, SB 1537 will allow those students to continue to attend college through Extended Campus and similar opportunities in other districts.

In addition, it requires the High Education Coordinating Commission to track participation and the amount of K-12 money spent and report those numbers to the Senate education committee in 2018. Part of the purpose of that report is to find other possible funding mechanisms.

The bill still faced opposition in the education committee, namely from Sen. Mark Hass, whose chief concern is the use of K-12 funding to pay for college.

While he said he supports the concept of the fifth year, he called the funding strategy "sleight of hand" on the part of schools who use it.

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