

# Merkley criticizes migrant detention program after touring Florida facility

By **Adriana Gomez Licon**  
Associated Press

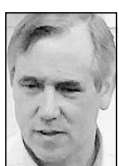
MIAMI — A Democratic senator from Oregon advocating against migrant youth detention camps says he toured a Florida facility and found children are being held there for too long in a restrictive environment.

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley said that he talked to three boys who also confirmed reports that employees told teenagers they would not be reunited with family if they misbehaved. "We should be having an expedited process to have kids placed with sponsors," Merkley

told The Associated Press. "The principle is you don't keep kids locked up."

Department of Health and Human Services spokesman Mark Weber said Wednesday that the release of children can be delayed "if a child presents with serious behavior incidents or impulsivity."

"The behavior is evaluated and informs the release recommendations," Weber said. He clarified that employees should not be discussing with the children the factors used to



**Merkley**

determine their release. "Staff will be retrained on this topic to ensure compliance."

About 1,600 children in government custody are housed at the privately run camp in Homestead, Florida. The health agency prefers to refer to it as a residential shelter.

The senator says it is the largest and least regulated of the facilities where the government holds children who cross the Mexican border.

The agency says children spend 58 days on average there. When the news media visited in June, officials said the average stay was 25 days.

Merkley has introduced legislation to shut down unlicensed facilities.

The Florida Department of Children and Families has said in an emailed statement that the facility is federal and the state child welfare agency "does not have any jurisdiction or involvement with children placed there."

In December, the government simultaneously announced the closure of an unlicensed detention camp in Tornillo, Texas, and the expansion of the Homestead facility from 1,350 to 2,350 beds.

EVENTS SCHEDULED MARCH 16, 23

# Workshops on improving family communication

Two free workshops aimed at teaching families how to improve their communication skills and their lives together will be offered the next two Saturdays in Baker City.

Jordyn Hobson, 24, a 2013 Baker High School graduate working on a degree in marriage and family studies, will present the workshops titled "Family Communication for Improved Family Functioning," as part of a faculty supervised practicum.

Hobson is a senior in the online program at Brigham Young University-Idaho. She will graduate in July with a bachelor's degree.

The first workshop is scheduled Saturday, March 16, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Baker Elks Lodge, 1896 Second St. The next session is scheduled the following Saturday, March 23, at the same time and same location.

Participants are asked to make arrangements for their children. Child care is not provided as part of the workshop. Light refreshments will be served and participants are encouraged to dress in layers for comfort during the session.

More information is available by emailing Hobson at [jhobson13002@gmail.com](mailto:jhobson13002@gmail.com)

# Storms transform Cascades snowpack

EUGENE (AP) — Oregon's snowpack — the amount of snow held by the mountains — was below normal in early February but a round of winter storms now has it above normal for much of the state, including the Willamette River Basin.

The Register-Guard reports a dramatic turnaround in weather, from warm and dry to cold and snowy, boosted the snowpack in the past month.

Scott Oviatt, Oregon snow survey supervisor for Natural Resources Conservation Service, said the storms were

"very beneficial to the state."

The Willamette River Basin's snowpack was at 110 percent of normal for this time of year on Monday, according to the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

On Feb. 8, the Willamette snowpack was 58 percent of normal. More snow now means more water this summer, when the snow melts.

Continued snow in the high country this spring will improve the snowpack even more. A flip back to warm and dry will put a dent in the naturally stored

water.

"We are optimistic but hedging our bets," Oviatt said.

The robust snowpack so far has left ski area managers near Eugene elated.

Last winter, Willamette Pass ski area was only open for a couple of days. This year, the ski area 69 miles southeast of Eugene off Highway 58 has been open since late December and will remain open three weeks into April.

"It's just a fantastic winter right now," said Willamette Pass owner Tim Wiper.

# SEARS

Continued from Page 1A

In January Sears Holding, which owns Sears stores but not those under the Sears Hometown name, announced

the closure about 80 stores across the U.S.

In December Sears Hometown announced a plan to close about 13 percent of its 750 stores.

The Hesters had previously owned the

Sears Hometown store in La Grande, but that store is now under the ownership of the Sears Hometown company.

The La Grande store is not slated to close, according to a report from The (La Grande) Observer.

# ARRESTS

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Williams has been charged with first-degree burglary, a Class A felony, and fourth-degree assault, a Class A misdemeanor.

Because the investigation is ongoing, the Sheriff's Department will release no other information at this

time, McClay said Tuesday.

The incident began when Prevo called Baker County Dispatch at about 9:30 p.m. Sunday. He told dispatchers he had been hit in the face. He had been in the press release.

When deputies arrived, they determined Prevo

had been in an altercation with his brother-in-law, Tad Williams. Prevo then began pushing and shoving his wife, Julie Prevo, Ash said.

During the fight, Prevo was in possession of a rifle and allegedly threatened to shoot Tad Williams.

Family members were able

to take the rifle away from Prevo, who then assaulted his father-in-law, Thomas Williams.

Before being transported to jail, Prevo first was taken to St. Alphonsus Medical Center in Baker City where he was treated for injuries sustained in the fight.

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## Baker County Sheriff's Office

**VIOLATION OF RELEASE AGREEMENT** (Baker County warrant): Ramon Nunez Jr., 36, of Baker City, 10:04 a.m. Tuesday at the Baker County Jail where he is being held on other charges.

**DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF INTOXICANTS:** Julie Lynn Carder, 57, of 11330 Baker St., 11:37 a.m. Tuesday, on Fourth Street near Grace Street; transported to the Baker County Jail where she was cited and released.

**CRIMINAL TRESPASS AND THEFT III** (Baker County Justice Court warrant): Edward Allen Braswell, 43, of Baker City, 11:58 a.m. Tuesday, at the Baker County Jail where he is being held on other charges.

**Oregon State Police Arrests, citations FAILURE TO APPEAR** (Clackamas County Circuit

Court): Forrest Lee Marquez, 40, of Portland, 5:03 p.m. Sunday, on Interstate 84, about 10 miles north of Baker City; jailed and later released.

**DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF INTOXICANTS, RECKLESS DRIVING, RESISTING ARREST, FAILURE TO DRIVE WITHIN LANE, OPEN CONTAINER OF ALCOHOL IN VEHICLE AND REFUSAL TO TAKE BREATH TEST:** Taryn Leigh Kruger, 42, of Halfway, 6:16 p.m. March 6, on Highway 203, about 10 miles northeast of Baker City; jailed and later released; police said Kruger was arrested after investigation of a report of a vehicle stuck in the mud about 10 feet off the highway.

**OFFENSIVE LITTERING:** Collin Patrick Jones, 23, of Hereford, 4:48 p.m. March 5; cited and released; police said the citation was issued after investigation of a report of a bunch of empty glass bottles found near Highway 30 and Bowen Valley.



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Friday, March 15 & Saturday, March 16  
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Questions? Please call Laura Huggins (541) 524-7732