

SCOUTS

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She wrote: "Putting your clothes in a garbage bag is a very uncomfortable position, I know this because it happened to me and I did not like it when I moved from home to home."

Anna also wanted to give every foster child a book or toy, and a stuffed animal because "kids don't always want to hug strangers."

CASA turned her essay into the Anna's Wish program. A duffel bag embroidered with "AW" is given to a child entering foster care. The bag is packed with a blanket, stuffed animal, book, and age-appropriate items such as shampoo, toothbrush, toothpaste, and personal hygiene items. Bags for babies include diapers, wipes and a bottle.

The bag then goes with the child when he or she moves.

"Our goal is to always have bags on hand ready to go to make sure they have what they need," said Mary Collard, executive director of CASA of Eastern Oregon.

For her Silver Award project, Tristen had several collection drives at stores in Baker City to secure donations. She also collected items



Lisa Britton/ForThe Baker City Herald

Tristen Tritt, center, along with Penelope Simmons, right, and Becky Snyder, back, helped pack bags full of supplies for CASA's Anna's Wish duffel bags that go to foster children. For her Silver Award in Girl Scouts, Tritt organized donation drives to collect items for the bags.

from family, friends and businesses such as Marvin Wood Products and Rite Aid.

"We got lots of bathroom necessities," Tritt said.

On Friday, she helped pack 25 duffel bags, each for a different age and had items left

over to fill more bags.

There are currently 45 children in foster care in Baker County.

Each Anna's Wish bag costs about \$30 — \$16 for the duffel, and \$15 worth of supplies. Anyone wishing to

sponsor a bag for Anna's Wish can donate at the CASA office in Baker City, email info@casa.org, or call 541-403-1375.

Little Free Library

Simmons, 14, chose a

project related to her love of reading — building a Little Free Library and installing it at Brooklyn Primary School.

"When I was a kid, I loved to read," she said. (She still does.)

"I love Dr. Seuss. I love the fun way he does lettering and characters."

— Penelope Simmons, 14, who decorated her Free Little Library with quotes from Dr. Seuss books

Jeron, Simmons built a wooden library.

"I actually earned my woodworking badge doing it," Simmons said.

Simmons' sister-in-law, Bethany Parker, helped her paint the exterior with characters and quotes from Dr. Seuss books.

"I love Dr. Seuss," Simmons said. "I love the fun way he does lettering and characters."

She and her dad installed the library on Friday in front of Brooklyn. It is already stocked with a variety of books for children, and Simmons has \$100 from Marvin Wood Products that will help buy books.

"We're saving that to restock with new ones kids might like," Simmons said.

The idea of a Little Free Library is simple: Take a book and share a book. Simmons added her library to the national map on the website littlefreelibrary.org.

Brown unveils plan to control PERS costs for schools

By Ted Sickinger
The Oregonian

Gov. Kate Brown rolled out a finance and politically ambitious proposal Friday to rein in increasing public pension costs for schools over the next 15 years by diverting state revenue streams and requiring public employees to contribute to their pension benefits.

The proposal is an effort to ensure that any new corporate tax money lawmakers dedicate to schools will make it into the classroom, and not be swallowed up by the pension system to backfill its growing deficit. It could serve as a backup plan in case lawmakers can't pass a tax plan.

Elements of Brown's plan have circulated for some time, but she hasn't offered much specificity to date. That changed Friday, as she unveiled a detailed set of options for lawmakers to consider.

The economics are based on a variety of assumptions, including the ongoing ability of pension fund managers to generate strong investment returns on the tax money diverted to help schools. Some of those revenue streams are volatile, and there is no guarantee they will generate the expected dollars. Elements of the plan could prove controversial to both business groups and public employees, and there is no assurance that lawmakers will agree to move it forward.

The plan only aims to protect one group of employers — school districts — and leaves state agencies, cities and counties and other government employers around the state to fend for themselves.

But a summary of the

plan drafted by Nik Blosser, the governor's chief of staff, noted that Brown's was the only proposal on the table that could stabilize pension costs for all K-12 school districts, providing certainty on budgeting the use of tax proceeds dedicated to schools.

The governor's plan calls on lawmakers to create a dedicated account at the Public Employees Retirement System that would be invested alongside regular pension assets and drawn down gradually to offset schools' pension costs.

She wants to seed the School District Offset Account with \$800 million in one-time revenues, and Blosser's presentation outlined a number of options to generate that money:

- Retain a portion of the personal kicker tax rebates that taxpayers are forecast to receive when they file their 2020 taxes. The governor's preferred option is to maintain the first \$100 in kicker rebates to each eligible taxpayer and send the rest to the offset account. That could raise an estimated \$400 million to \$500 million and would require a supermajority vote in the Legislature.
- Transfer nearly \$500 million of the \$2 billion capital surplus at SAIF Corp., a state-owned workers' compensation insurance company, to the school fund. This could be accomplished with a simple majority vote of the Legislature.
- Transfer \$100 million in general/lottery funds that the governor included in her proposed budget, plus an estimated \$83.3 million in tax revenues from the repatriation of corporate profits stimulated by federal tax reforms passed in 2017.

- Place a temporary surcharge on state fees and licenses.

On top of those one-time revenues, the governor is proposing to dedicate \$1.6 billion in state revenue over the next 15 years to the fund. Those include tax dollars that lawmakers agreed to divert to help schools in 2018. But the governor wants to extend the period they would be dedicated to the school district account from six to 15 years. They include:

- Interest on unclaimed property held by the Department of State Lands and state debt collections exceeding historical averages. The governor's office estimates that could raise \$185 million over 15 years.
 - "Above trend" capital gains and estate tax revenues. The portion of those taxes exceeding a rolling historical average would be diverted to the School District Offset Account for 15 years. The governor's office said that could raise \$1.4 billion for the fund, the largest source of funds in the plan.
- One key plank of the proposal — and likely the most controversial with teachers — is to reduce school districts' pension obligations by instituting new pension contributions from employees. The governor's plan calls for educators who are active Tier 1 and 2 members of

PERS — those hired before Aug. 28, 2003, and working — to contribute 3% of their pay, after exempting the first \$20,000 of salary.

Those hired after that date, called Tier 3 or OPSRP members, would contribute 1.5% of their pay after exempting the first \$20,000 in salary. Those changes could cut schools' pension contributions by about \$100 million per biennium starting in the two-year budget cycle that begins in July 2021, and increase gradually from there.

The governor's plan is far more expansive than the school district PERS plan

she successfully pushed for the Legislature to pass last year. It diverts revenue streams to the school fund for a longer period, and is particularly dependent on future capital gains tax revenues, which are historically volatile, and make up nearly 40% of the forecast receipts in the plan. The \$1.3 billion estimate from capital gains is based on an analysis of historical trends by the Office of Economic Analysis, but the results would depend on future performance of financial markets and whether Brown can convince lawmakers to divert those tax revenues for 15 years.

NEWS OF RECORD

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POLICE LOG

Baker City Police OFFENSIVE LITTERING: Dennis Ray Richens, 39, transient, 2:59 p.m. Saturday, on Sunridge Lane; jailed.

Baker County Sheriff UNLAWFUL POSSESSION OF METHAMPHETAMINE: Jeffery Lee Caward, 40, of Ontario, 10:36 a.m. Friday, at 22267 Highway 86; Undersheriff Jef Van Arsdall said sheriff's deputies were called to the Interpretive Center on a report of Caward walking around in his socks yelling. He subsequently was taken into custody on the possession of methamphetamine charge.

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