

Local & State

TRAINING

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The grant money will be used to establish two teaching labs at BTI from which lessons will be streamed throughout the state over the Zoom computer app.

Through partnerships with the participating hospitals — which also include those in Baker City, La Grande and Pendleton — students will complete in-person skills labs and clinical work (overseen by licensed staff) with clinic or hospital patients or residents of long-term care centers, Springer said.

“This was an attempt to hit rural communities,” Dalton said of the program expansion the grant funding will allow. “We hope to work in other hospitals down the road.”

Springer said BTI began the grant application process

“We like to be able to reach into rural and frontier communities”

— **Tonia Springer, program coordinator, BTI**

in February of this year.

“We saw the grant opportunity and we like to be innovative,” she said. “We like to be able to reach into rural and frontier communities.”

Dalton said he believes the BTI project was funded because of the training center’s reputation for building successful programs with integrity that are created in partnerships, such as those developed with area hospitals, and with state and national leaders.

U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, both Oregon Democrats, expressed their support for BTI’s successful grant application in

an email to the Herald.

“Eastern Oregon benefits in a big way from this good news that taps into technology to educate the health care providers of tomorrow in rural communities,” Wyden said. “The importance of telemedicine and distance learning has been magnified during the coronavirus pandemic, and I’m gratified that Eastern Oregon has earned these federal resources to support a robust health care system and a strong quality of life.”

Merkley, the top Democrat on the Senate Appropriations subcommittee, said: “High quality, reliable broadband internet service has never been more important than it is right now — especially for our students who are learning remotely, and for our health care providers who are working around the clock

to provide exceptional care and essential services to their communities.

“I’m pleased that this funding is headed to our state, where it will make Baker Technical Institute’s remote health classes accessible for more students, and help us keep communities in Eastern Oregon safe,” Merkley said.

Dalton noted that most of the instruction, which provides training in courses including a Certified Nursing Assistant program, phlebotomy, emergency medicine and medical terminology, also is offered to high school students at no cost.

“This is good for the students, good for the communities and good for economic development,” Dalton said.

More information is available by calling BTI at 541-524-2651 or online at bakerti.org

LOCAL BRIEFING

Tickets available for Crossroads Art Center’s drive-thru Oktoberfest

There is still time to purchase tickets for this year’s Oktoberfest fundraiser for Crossroads Carnegie Art Center. The second-annual event is a drive-thru dinner and virtual auction set for Saturday, Oct. 17. No tickets will be sold at the event.

Dinner tickets are \$35 per person and must be purchased by 5 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 10, through www.crossroads-arts.org.

A bottle of wine from Copper Belt Winery or a growler of beer from Barley Brown’s can be purchased separately. These must be pre-ordered through the Crossroads’ website.

There are three dinner times. The meal includes bratwurst (traditional and vegetarian), sauerkraut, hot German potato salad, stoneground mustard, and cucumber-tomato-onion salad. Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort is catering the dinner, and will donate employee time to prepare the meal. Dessert is a schaum torte prepared by Sweet Wife Baking.

At the drive-thru, ticket holders receive dinner, beverage if ordered, dessert, a table cloth, festive napkins, and a code for one free hour of Oktoberfest music courtesy of Elkhorn Media Group.

The virtual auction opened online Oct. 2 and closes at 9 p.m. Oct. 18. Successful bidders can pick up their items on Tuesday, Oct. 20, at Crossroads, 2020 Auburn Ave.

Local students named to dean’s list for summer term at Eastern Oregon Univ.

LA GRANDE — Lynn Robinson and Mitchell Stephens of Baker City, and Monette Martin of North Powder, were among 69 students named to the dean’s list for the summer term at Eastern Oregon University.

PRESCHOOL

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The BELC preschool follows the school district schedule and offers 1,020 hours a year, said Robert Kleng, director of Eastern Oregon University Head Start.

Head Start utilizes the Conscious

Discipline approach, which is an evidence-based method that integrates social-emotional learning, discipline, and self-regulation.

Their school readiness approach, according to their website, includes language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches

toward learning, physical well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development.

To learn more, visit www.eou.edu/head-start/. To inquire about Head Start and the income guidelines for Preschool Promise, call Jen Goodman at 541-786-5535.

Drought stirs fears of another Dust Bowl near Madras

By Michael Kohn
The (Bend) Bulletin

Evan Thomas, a farmer in Jefferson County, is used to seeing the landscape around his farm covered in various shades of green. This year those colors have mostly turned to brown, with occasional clouds of dust filling the skies.

“It’s a horrible, horrible mess,” said Thomas, who owns T&H Farms LLC with his uncle Mark Hagman. They grow carrots for seed, Kentucky bluegrass for seed, wheat for seed and timothy hay on 1,250 acres near Culver.

“It has caused erosion for us and poor driving conditions for others. It’s blowing in people’s homes. Yeah, it’s horrible,” he added.

In addition to causing a hazard for drivers, Thomas, 47, said the dust affects daily life for Jefferson County residents, covering cars and creeping into homes.

The dust is the result of persistent drought afflict-



Ryan Brennecke / The (Bend) Bulletin

On Wednesday, Oct. 7, Mark Hagman, left, and Evan Thomas stand on a parcel of land at their family’s farm in Culver that was not planted this season due to drought.

ing all of Central Oregon — drought that prevents farmers from planting crops on all their land, leaving wide swaths of it exposed to the elements.

Drought conditions have left Jefferson County farmers with just about half the normal amount of water they have historically been allotted annually. Over the past two years, the land idled has reached 40% for many farms. Thomas explains that

farms are still producing about the same acreage of carrot seed, but other crops are being cut. Jefferson County produces around 35% of the world’s carrot seed.

Cover crops are used to protect idle ground from weeds and topsoil loss to the winds. The seeds are usually planted in winter. But farmers rarely cover all their fields, preferring to leave some ground open, said Thomas. If more water becomes available they

can use it to plant a productive crop in spring.

Another drawback of planting cover crops is the cost, especially for an activity that generates no revenue. Farmers are already struggling due to fewer acres planted.

“It’s not cheap,” said Thomas, whose great-great grandparents homesteaded land near Culver in 1903. “Planting a wheat cover crop is \$14 an acre for the seed, and you still have to do all the land preparation, get your ground ready to receive that, and there are labor and fuel overhead costs to get that job done.”

JoHanna Symons, co-founder of Symons Beef Co. in Madras, said planting a cover crop is unsustainable over the long-term.

“Expenses incurred in that cover crop will carry over into the next year and make the profit margin on the next crop that is planted that much smaller,” said Symons, who runs her company with her husband, Jeremy Symons.

The increasing costs are weighing on the bottom line of many farms in the area, she added.

“Mortgage payments are still due and payable on land — the finance companies aren’t giving farmers a break because of the lack of crops being grown, which means lack of income,” said Symons. “Our income has basically been cut in half and our expenses have stayed the same,” she said.

Thomas also worries that continued drought will put farms out of business, leaving more farmland barren, creating more dust and damaging the area’s economy.

“If we have two more years like this year, it will be a dust bowl,” said Thomas. The source of Jefferson County’s problem lies 100 miles to the south, where Wickiup Reservoir stands empty. The reservoir stores water used by the North Unit

Irrigation District.

The lack of water stored in the reservoir is due to weak snowpack in the Cascades in recent years.

All three counties in Central Oregon are now in a state of drought declared by the governor. Jefferson County is suffering the most — according to the U.S. drought monitor, more than half of the county is in a state of extreme drought.

The dry conditions are partially due to climate change, said Larry O’Neill, an associate professor at the College of Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Sciences at Oregon State University. Two decades of climate analysis largely show an increase in temperature in Central Oregon over the last half of the 20th century and a decrease in precipitation, said O’Neill.

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State prisons to end education contracts with community colleges

■ Decision means \$3 million annual cut for Blue Mountain Community College, which employs 27 people in three state prisons, including Powder River in Baker City

By Antonio Sierra
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Blue Mountain Community College sits on a hill overlooking Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution, and for decades, the college has sent educators down the hill to teach adult education classes to inmates behind prison walls.

As the program draws to a close, that relationship is now in jeopardy.

In late August, the Oregon Department of Corrections told BMCC and other community colleges across the state that it intended to end its educational contracts in 2021. For BMCC, that means losing out on a \$3 million annual contract that encompasses 27 jobs across three state prisons: EOIC, Two Rivers Correctional Institution, and Powder River Correctional Facility in Baker City.

BMCC President Dennis Bailey-Fougner said the college wasn’t consulted ahead of the department’s decision.

“That was news to us, to be honest with you,” he said.

With dozens of jobs at stake, Bailey-Fougner said the state’s prisons benefit from having experienced educators lead the program.

BMCC is now working with a coali-

tion of college administrations and unions to try to get the state to reverse its decision.

But the department of corrections remains firm that significant changes need to be made to the prison’s adult education programs, which include GED courses and English as a second language classes.

“DOC has an unprecedented budget shortfall and this change allows for significant savings,” department communications manager Jennifer Black wrote in a statement. “Repurposing contract dollars for DOC staff positions will give the department greater flexibility in the delivery of adult basic education programming, will increase weekly classroom hours, allow for consistency between institutions as (adults in custody) transfer from one institution to the next, and enhance case management information-sharing both during the AIC’s incarceration phase and as AICs transition to the community.”

In a Sept. 30 letter to the Oregon Community Colleges Association, department Director Collette Peters wrote that the state prison system started the year with a \$110 million projected shortfall and has spent the ensuing months

making cuts, slashing \$25 million from its budget before the Oregon Legislature lopped off another \$2.4 million in August.

Canceling its contracts and creating 70 positions internally would save the department \$1 million, or about 6% of the \$16.4 million DOC spends over its two-year budget cycle on outsourcing its adult education programs.

But the department thinks it could cushion the blow of future budget cuts in a different way, by offsetting some of its staff reductions.

“(The) conversion allows for the creation of a substantial number of (department) staff positions, establishing positions for qualified staff to go into in the event their positions are impacted by future layoffs,” correctional division staff wrote in a policy memo.

In an Oct. 6 email, department communications coordinator Vanessa Vanderzee wrote that instructors would be expected to have a bachelor’s or master’s degree depending on the position, but existing prison staff could also fill positions for coordinators, lab supervisors and administrators.

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New At The Library

Patrons can reserve materials in advance online or by calling 541-523-6419. Drive-in hours at 2400 Resort St. are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from noon to 4 p.m.

FICTION

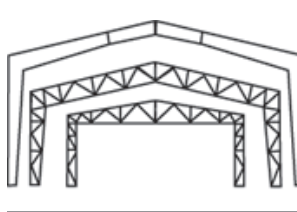
- “The Vanishing Half,” Brit Bennett
- “The Lost and Found Bookshop,” Susan Wiggs
- “Shadows of Annihilation,” S. M. Stirling
- “My Brother’s Destroyer,” Clayton Lindemuth
- “Actress,” Anne Enright

NONFICTION

- “Prayer,” Oswald Chambers
- “His Truth Is Marching On,” Jon Meacham
- “Compromised,” Peter Strzok
- “Wasteland,” W. Poole
- “Homelands,” Alfredo Corchado





DVDS

- “Body Cam” (Action)
- “True History of the Kelly Gang” (Action)
- “Red Joan” (Drama)
- “Untogether” (Drama)
- “Waiting for the Barbarians” (Drama)



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