



GROWING SUCCESS

Central Oregonians support CSAs, which allow farmers to understand their customer demand and plan their crops accordingly • BUSINESS, C1

The Bulletin

EMPOWERING OUR COMMUNITY bendbulletin.com

BI-MART

WIN OR BUY!

ON LUCKY NUMBER TUESDAY

Over \$350,000 in prizes is up for grabs every Tuesday!

Win or Save \$10 Tuesday only!



59.99

Hamilton Beach Toaster Oven Air Fryer Everyday Bi-Mart 69.99

Price & prize effective February 15, 2022

SPECIAL REPORT

Central Oregon’s child care desert

Central Oregon **parents** partner with churches to form nonprofit

BY ZACK DEMARS
The Bulletin

Casey Lamont knew there had to be other parents out there like her.

In 2019, when her son, Milo, was about 6 months old, she knew even just a few hours of child care a day would make her work much more efficient. A calligraphy artist, her work was sporadic, and she noticed half-hour tasks were four times longer when she had to hold Milo at the same time.

“I’m able to stay home and my work can be flexible, but I didn’t want that to be all I was doing, and I just knew there were other moms in the same boat,” Lamont said. “Could we share the burden of child care?”

Lamont started asking other parents that question. Now, those conversations have inspired a promising response to the region’s child care shortage.

ReVillage, a nonprofit formed by parents and local faith leaders in 2021, utilizes empty space in area churches as co-op day care centers.

See **Parents** / A6



Dean Guernsey/The Bulletin

Zaiden Nelson, 2, from left, Joslyn Walker, ReVillage parent and assistant director, Jonas Walker, 3, and Oliver Bourque, 2, play with blue dough Feb. 10 at ReVillage Community Co-op Childcare Center in Bend.

Editor’s note: This is the second day of a two-part series leading up to a City Club forum on child care issues in Central Oregon. More coverage at bendbulletin.com.

About our coverage

The Bulletin shared stories last week of parents and providers struggling through a broken child care system, where child care operators keep long waitlists to fill limited — and often expensive — slots.

In a community survey we conducted several weeks ago before launching our child care series, one theme was clear from the dozens of responses we received: Pretty much anyone in Central Oregon knows there’s a crisis of child care availability — but what’s being done about it?

Today, our coverage turns to solutions. In the absence of a society-wide reconsideration of the value of child care and how it gets funded, providers, parents and nonprofits are finding creative ways to fill some of the gaps they face.

Four responses to the region’s child

care shortage are featured in today’s stories to provide just a few ideas about what more could be done: Parents coming together to form their own care, business leaders coaching new child care providers, a school starting a daycare for its own employees and an ambitious partnership to deploy hundreds of new child care slots to three sites.

There are more solutions to be explored.

We’ll continue reporting on the solutions that are making a difference locally and in other communities in the weeks and months to come: From developers designing housing that can double as at-home daycare, to scholarships that support professional development for child care providers, to state subsidy programs that guarantee slots for low-income families and pay teachers a living wage.

— Zack Demars, The Bulletin

ABOUT THIS SERIES

The Bulletin wants to offer insight by telling their stories through a new series, Faces of Homelessness, and answer some of those questions. Every two weeks this year, Bulletin reporters will introduce readers to a different homeless person.

The Bulletin will profile individuals of all kinds experiencing homelessness on all fronts in Central Oregon. Readers will meet people who look and sound like them, and many people who do not.

The series spawned from conversations The Bulletin convened with local service providers, advocacy groups and elected leaders. They shared that misconceptions some community members hold about people experiencing homeless are some of the biggest barriers they face in responding to homelessness, and this series seeks to broaden the conversation.

The goal of the series isn’t to advocate for any one outcome, but to paint a more honest picture of the complicated reality of homelessness in Central Oregon and shed light on the preconceptions and misconceptions about those living unhoused.

The time is right for the series: A 2021 survey from Invisible People, a national homeless advocacy organization, found most people (70%) surveyed think homelessness has increased in their communities (and they’re right: The homeless population nationwide and in Central Oregon has increased in recent years).

But the survey also found many hold misconceptions about who is actually homeless. Survey respondents guessed 21% of those experiencing homelessness were veterans, while the Department of Housing and Urban Development puts that figure at 8% nationwide. Meanwhile, respondents guessed those under 25 made up 18% of the population, while HUD estimates the share is 26%.

Meeting the community members who experience homelessness won’t “solve” the issue. But by seeing eye to eye with the faces of homelessness, The Bulletin hopes we can help us all remember the people behind the issues we’re discussing.

faces of homelessness

MEET CENTRAL OREGON’S HOUSELESS COMMUNITY

Homelessness in Central Oregon was scarcely noticeable as recent as five years ago. Today, no one can ignore there are hundreds of people without a house to call their home.

Who faces houselessness in Bend, Sisters, Redmond, La Pine? Who are the real people impacted by skyrocketing housing prices, decisions about shelters or plans to sweep informal camps? Who do we mean when we talk about those who are homeless, experiencing homelessness, unhoused or unsheltered?

BY DAVID JASPER • The Bulletin

Duayne Dittmer

Local man has called Deschutes National Forest home for 3 years

The ponderosa pines growing along China Hat Road in Deschutes National Forest stand as they have for centuries. Although these days, they tower over woods peppered with tarps, tents, trailers and trucks.

The houseless have often sought shelter in the national forest, their campsites making up a kind of impermanent neighborhood. Some vehicles look as though they haven’t budged in months. Other camps suggest more financial security, such as RVs surrounded only by neatly arranged solar panels.

While plenty of campsites are visible from China Hat Road, others lie deeper in the forest, scattered along the many eroded dirt roads winding through it.

This is where you’ll find the trailer of Duayne Dittmer, 58, who will mark three years living here in March. On the last Friday of January, he sat in a folding chair and answered questions in his gravelly voice.



Dean Guernsey/The Bulletin

Duayne Dittmer and his dog at their camp off of China Hat Road.

The first six months he lived out here were spent in the tattered tent that still stands next to the trailer, now serving as storage for some of his belongings.

Dittmer has lived in Oregon since the age of 8. Before coming to Bend, he lived in La Grande, the last five years in Section 8 housing. Retired now, Dittmer said his last job was in construction in and around La Grande. Earlier in his life, he owned a video store for several years.

Dittmer seems to be a popular or

key figure in his neck of the forest. During the 35 minutes he spoke to The Bulletin, the Apple Watch on his wrist chimed several times, one caller trying to locate another nearby camper.

See **Dittmer** / A5

