

Poverty level estimates change federal funding

By JESSICA POLLARD
STAFF WRITER



Dirksen

Browning

Drops in poverty level estimates between 2015 and 2016 resulted in less federal funding for some local rural districts this year, including Hermiston.

During the last fiscal year, the district was eligible for more than \$85,000 from the Title V Rural and Low Income Schools grant. This year, they weren't eligible at all, stunning officials at the school district.

"This came as a surprise to us," said Assistant Superintendent Bryn Browning. "We've gotten it for eight or nine years."

Funds from the grant are typically distributed between the schools in the district, and go toward hiring substitutes for teachers that miss school for professional and leadership development opportunities, Browning said.

She added since the district learned it was ineligible

served by the agency must come from families with incomes below the poverty line, according to the Oregon Department of Education.

This year, 33 fewer school districts in Oregon fit the bill than during the 2018 school year, although five did gain eligibility. La Grande School District received more than \$35,000 in Title V funding during the last school year, but none this year.

"The Oregon local educational agencies that were not eligible in (2019), after being eligible in (2018), were all ineligible because their poverty level decreased to below 20 percent," an official from the U.S. Department of Education stated in an email to the *Hermiston Herald*.

The U.S. Department of Education uses the most current available data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates available to determine which agencies make the cut.

This year's funding was determined by 2016 estimates, which showed a decline in poverty rates that some administrators found surprising.

In Hermiston, the 2015 poverty estimates put the district at 24.4% of students coming from low income families. The 2016 estimates put that number just under 17%.

Next year's eligibility will be determined by 2017's poverty rates, according to the U.S. Department of Education. In 2017, Hermiston's estimated rate showed just over 17% of students came from families with incomes below the poverty line.

"But our need seems to be growing," Browning said.

And according to 2018 U.S. Census Bureau estimates, she's not wrong. The district's poverty rate neared 20% last year.

Last year, the Morrow County School District received an allotment

of more than \$33,000 from the Rural and Low Income Schools grant. And according to Superintendent Dirk Dirksen, the district has received funds since he took on his current position in 2011.

"We use the rural schools grant for teacher professional development as well as Friday school and summer school activities that we do," he said. "As we process in working through this, it's kind of a balancing game."

Dirksen said the district will dip into general funds, and hopefully utilize Student Success Act funding to fill the gap.

"It was a surprise to me," he said. "I know the Title programs are always up and down."

Dirksen pointed out that five of the district's schools have high rates of low income students that make them part of Oregon's Community Eligibility Provisions program. The CEP makes

lunch free for all students at those schools.

"Homelessness is obviously up," he added.

The district recorded 126 students as homeless last year, an increase of 20 from the year prior.

Ultimately, 24 Oregon school districts were allocated Rural and Low Income Schools funding. Last year, the state allocated funds to 46.

Many of the districts eligible for the grant this year, including Athena-Weston, were also eligible for the Small, Rural School Achievement Program for districts with smaller populations and opted for that funding instead, according to the Oregon Department of Education.

Poverty estimates for 2018 from the U.S. Census Bureau put Oregon's poverty level below the 17% national average, at 14.3%. Umatilla County's 2018 estimate was at 19.8%.

Hermiston school board approves bond projects manager

HERMISTON HERALD

The Hermiston School Board approved a project manager for the 2019 bond projects this week.

"This is a very exciting day," said second vice chair Ginny Holthus.

District superintendent Tricia Mooney recommended Wenaha Group Incorporated to the board during the school board's Dec. 9 meeting. She said the project management and consulting firm was the lone applicant during the request for proposal process.

"Wenaha Group has partnered with Hermiston School District for quite a while," board chairwoman Karen Sherman said. "I was excited when I heard they put in for request for proposal."

Dave Fischel, current vice president of Wenaha Group, was project manager for the 2008 bond projects, according to a recent press release from the district.

Wenaha Group provided a facilities assessment for the Umatilla School District, which completed construction projects from a \$10.5 million bond in June.

The Pendleton-based firm has also worked with the Milton-Freewater and Pendleton school districts, as well as the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, according to its website.

Voters approved the district's \$82.7 million bond in November. Bond projects include the replacement of Rocky Heights Elementary School and the construction of a new elementary school.

High schoolers win Congressional App Challenge

By JESSICA POLLARD
STAFF WRITER

The office of U.S. Representative Greg Walden recognized a team of four high schoolers this week as winners of the 2019 Congressional App Challenge for Oregon's District 2.

Seniors Rogelio Lemus, JJ Fitzgerald, Laine Whelan and junior Adamaryz Lopez Naverette won the competition for their creation of an application known as FINANA (Finances Incorporated Nationally Allowing Non-profit Automation).

According to a press release recently issued by the school district, the app assists non-profits in fundraising efforts by allowing users to inventory their proceeds and acts as a point of sale system.

"It's a web app that allows many non-profit organizations to manage



Contributed photo by Hermiston School District

Seniors (right to left) JJ Fitzgerald, Laine Whelan, Rogelio Lemus and junior Adamaryz Lopez Naverette won the Congressional App Challenge for Oregon's District 2 this week.

their fundraising using an SQL database to store and track all items being sold," Lemus said in a video used to explain the application.

The four high schoolers utilized multiple programming languages and two web servers to create a web

page for the application.

This is the second year in a row that Hermiston teens won the App Challenge for District 2.

Last year Lemus was a junior when he and Ethan Orozco developed BANANA (Basic App

to Notify Authorities of Non-Authorized Abductions), which utilizes facial recognition technology to locate missing people.

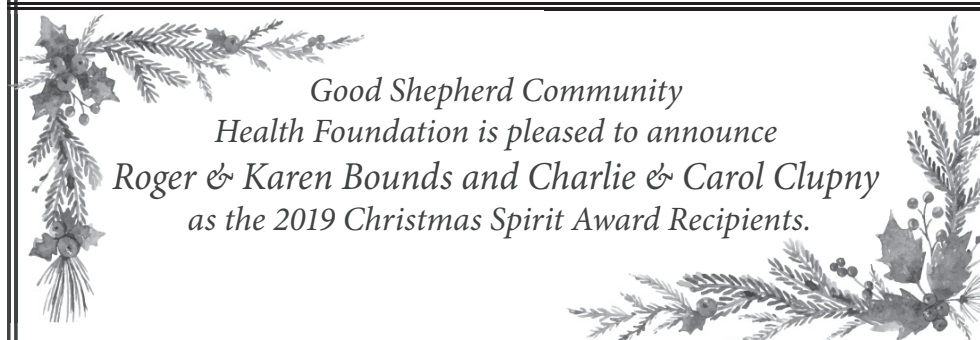
Lemus got the idea for FINANA while helping out with a church fundraiser.

In 2016, Courtney Cash, Marvin Hozi and Jordan Liebe were the first high schoolers to win the Congressional App Challenge.

This year's winning team has been invited to a springtime reception in Washington D.C. to show congress members how FINANA operates.

"The FINANA app stood out because it had a great amount of detailed coding," stated Hermiston High School computer science teacher, Robert Theriault in the recent news release.

24th Annual Christmas Spirit Award Presentations



Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation is pleased to announce Roger & Karen Bounds and Charlie & Carol Clupny as the 2019 Christmas Spirit Award Recipients.

Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation is pleased to honor Roger & Karen Bounds as recipients of the 24th Annual Christmas Spirit Award. This award is given to those who exemplify the Spirit of Christmas by giving of themselves to others all throughout the year.

Roger & Karen Bounds have a long history of community service in the greater Hermiston area. They have spent countless hours seeking to help individuals in need or to enhance the ability of others to be successful.

Karen has participated as a charter member of the Desert Arts Council and chaired many events. They are both enthusiastic supporters of the Hermiston Warming Station, dedicating countless hours to help the indigent or underserved of our community. They have provided two buildings to house the station at various times when there was a need.

Roger & Karen have given many unsolicited and anonymous acts of kindness to those in need. They quietly support a multitude of non-profit organizations through donations and contributions, and volunteer the use of their personal skills and abilities to promote education and literacy within our community.

Their various acts of kindness include visiting the shut-ins, the aged, providing dinners for the underserved and to those who are grieving. They are examples of benevolent service and a willingness to dedicate their time and energy to assist others and make the Hermiston community a great place to live.

It is for these reasons that Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation, which strives to make our community a better place to live, has selected Roger & Karen Bounds as 2019 Christmas Spirit Award recipients.



Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation is pleased to honor Charlie & Carol Clupny as recipients of the 24th Annual Christmas Spirit Award. This award is given to those who exemplify the Spirit of Christmas by giving of themselves to others all throughout the year.

Charlie & Carol Clupny are kind, compassionate, and enthusiastic members of our community who give of their time, talents and resources to various organizations to benefit others. Their dedication and work ethic has blessed the lives of many community members.

They actively give service to the Lions Club, been avid supporters of the Hermiston High School band, and volunteered to help individuals in need without hesitation and formal requests. They exemplify the virtues of integrity, compassion, and caring concern for others less fortunate.

Both have served the Parkinson's Support Group that brings comfort and understanding to those who are afflicted with Parkinson's disease. Carol has written a book that has been widely acclaimed in documenting her journey and experiences that has helped others through this debilitating and life-changing experience. Charlie has been an emcee for various worthy causes, and is a CASA worker, and both are supporters of Made to Thrive helping the youth within our community.

You will not find a more kind, loving or gentle couple to grace any community. They do not seek the limelight but are known for their benevolence by friends and strangers alike.

It is for these reasons that Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation, which strives to make our community a better place to live, has selected Charlie & Carol Clupny as 2019 Christmas Spirit Award recipients.

The Foundation mission is to enhance the quality of life and general health of residents living in West Umatilla and Morrow County communities by raising funds and giving to community projects. Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation reviews funding requests and makes awards for worthwhile projects twice a year. The next deadline for submitting grant applications to the Foundation is January 31, 2020. Groups or individuals interested in making a donation or being considered for funding are encouraged to call the Foundation office at 667-3419.

Best wishes for a happy holiday season.



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