



UPDATES

Wyden touts Boardman child care center as model for nation

Child care in U.S.
needs the physical
infrastructure
and people

By ERICK PETERSON
EDITOR/SENIOR REPORTER

The Families First Childcare Center in Boardman and the people making it happen impressed U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden.

“This is just incredible,” Wyden said.

The Democrat visited the center Tuesday, Aug. 31, and afterward promised to bring this success story to Washington.

The center serves 53 children and has “maxed out” its space at 255 Olson Road in Boardman. It has four classrooms for students, who are between six weeks old to 12 years old. It is open from 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday. It operates on a \$50,000 budget each month. Sponsors provide \$30,000 of this budget.

The center fills a need in its community to care for children when their parents are at work. This is a local problem recognized in communities throughout the country.

“We need more supply,” Wyden said, explaining child care presents a supply-side problem. This need is particularly strong among economically disadvantaged people.

“This need of child care in our community has been known for years,” said Torrie Griggs, Boardman Chamber of Commerce executive director.

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HERMISTON ASSEMBLY looks to future with renovations

Kathy Aney/Hermiston Herald

Daniel Sandoval and Betsy Jones, of the Hermiston Assembly, cleans and shines a door on Tuesday, Sept. 6, 2021, during a work day at the church.

Church adapts to pandemic, readies itself for renewal

By ERICK PETERSON
EDITOR/SENIOR REPORTER

The people of Hermiston Assembly are working toward a renewal.

Terry Haight, lead pastor of the church, said this renewal comes at a time when people are in need.

Haight, who has been Assembly pastor for more than 23 years, averages 120 attendees for Sunday service in his Hermiston church. Last week, he drew 150 worshippers. He also had a regular online viewing audience of 30 to 50 people.

Relaunching Sunday, Sept. 12, he said Hermiston Assembly has not actually ever been closed. It had church services for five months last year, reopened for three weeks in June and then shut down in-person services again during a new spike in COVID-19 cases. While their in-person services have been closed, they have broadcast services online, including YouTube.

During the online days, the church shifted from social media as a form of advertising to a primary form of communication. Haight and his team also developed a shorter, abbreviated ser-

vice, called Church on Demand, a 20-to-25-minute church experience.

In October 2020, when the church brought back its in-person congregation, Haight and his team continued their work online, but they believed more changes were necessary. So they moved their congregation downstairs the following month, which is where they have remained.

Downstairs, they could space their chairs as needed. The pews upstairs could not, of course, be moved, which made social distancing difficult. The downstairs also is a smaller area, which was more appropriate, Haight said, to a smaller congregation. Fewer people had returned to church since before the pandemic.

They were hopeful people would come back but only half of people did, Haight said, adding people probably were worried about COVID-19 infection.

He understands people’s worries. He has had members of his church contract COVID-19. A spouse of someone who attends, he said, died, though Haight does not link the death to church attendance. He said he does not know anyone who died as a result of attending his church.

People on his ministerial team have contracted COVID-19, he said.

He said he makes announcements to wear masks, though he does not police the practice. Maybe 25% of people wear masks, he said.

Starting Sept. 12, volunteers and staff are working on a remodel of the church. Built in 1976, the remodel is not the first or even the larg-

est. In 2004, new pews were installed and new carpeting was placed. The latest revisions include window coverings, which will block sunlight and allow the church to control lighting. This will be better for filming. Also, the church will have improved sound-proofing.

And though the stage also is being renovated — the iconic Jesus sign is being replaced — there will be no change in theology. In fact, the church is changing some of its language to clarify their Jesus-centered beliefs. A new mission statement proclaims, “We exist to make Jesus famous in our lives, homes and cities.”

He is planning a new sermon series. Starting Sept. 12, the series will continue eight to 12 weeks with messages that follow one another.

A right time for renewal and house parties

During the pandemic, Haight said he has had to “go back to the drawing board” to meet people’s needs. Online offerings were one major change, which has been embraced.

His congregation has gotten younger, he said, and their spirit is different. Whereas prior to the pandemic many people were going to church out of habit or obligation, many people now are appearing with greater interest. After having felt loneliness and depression from the isolation of lockdowns, they are returning to church with a hunger. They want to worship and gather with fellow believers.

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Saving Providence

Hermiston family races to raise \$400K to treat daughter suffering from genetic disorder

By WIL PHINNEY
FOR THE HERMISTON HERALD

HERMISTON — The hazel eyes of Providence Grace Rector dart back and forth behind thick lenses in round red frames. Her face constantly twitches, but otherwise it is without expression. Her arms are constantly moving, unintentionally. Her little legs are strapped at the ankle to the footrests on her wheelchair.

Providence means “protective care of God,” which is reflected in the strong faith of her parents, Miranda and Jason Rector, but they know

a contribution from science will be needed to find the medical miracle their daughter needs.

And now, two-and-half years after their daughter was diagnosed with Early Infantile Epileptic Encephalopathy-37 (EIEE-37), the Rectors and other parents like them are hopeful — and optimistic — that a potential study of gene replacement therapy could one day lead to a better quality of life for their children.

In August, with the help of Rare Village Foundation, a fundraising platform for families of children with rare diseases, three mothers — one from Croatia, one living in the United Kingdom and one in Colorado — established a nonprofit called “Finding Hope for FRRS1L” (pronounced “frizzle”). In

less than 24 hours more than \$100,000 was raised, and within five days the total had doubled.

Miranda, who is enrolled Chippewa from the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians of North Dakota and also Puerto Rican. People in Puerto Rico, where several children with EIEE-37 live, have given more than \$50,000.

What FRRS1L is

FRRS1L is the name of a protein-coding gene contained in all cells of the brain. It helps send messages between cells. The gene disorder, which results in loss of function for that gene, is a mutation triggered by the combination of each parent’s damaged DNA. The disorder produces epi-

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Miranda Rector/Contributed Photo

Providence at 14 months old smiles with her dad, Jason Rector of Hermiston, a month before her regression and excessive seizure activity starts.

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