

**JILLI**

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her, helping her lead an adult life, Kristi Smalley said.

Kristi Smalley is on a board that oversees the EOSSB. As such, she helps watch over the decisions of that organization, which is a personal matter to her because her daughter receives assistance from it.

Four EOSSB personal service workers supervise Jillie Smalley on activities, including her regular walks and her employment.

**EOSSB helps people live regular lives**

Laura Noppenberger, executive director, and Kristi Avery, Umatilla County lead personal agent, said EOSSB exists to help people with intellectual disabilities who are 18 and over. They receive assistance in their own homes and communities.

“We advocate for services and



Kathy Aney/Hermiston Herald

**Jillie Smalley, who has autism and a seizure disorder, loves her job at the Hermiston Pizza Hut where she has worked as a dishwasher for 11 years.**

resources for those people we serve,” Avery said. “We help people live better, more positive lives. It’s interesting, and there’s something new every day. And the people we help are great.”

Noppenberger said she has worked for the EOSSB since it began, two decades ago. Among the

many things she had done for others, Noppenberger said helping a person obtain a ramp for her home was one of the most satisfying.

Avery said she has helped many people during the 20 years she has been with the organization, including helping one Milton-Freewater resi-

dent move out of her parent’s home and into her own place.

People, they said, can receive a wide range of assistance. A helper may, for example, go to a person’s home to set up medication, aid in laundry, create meal plans or go to the store.

EOSSB helpers also may assist with employment, as with Jillie Smalley, they stated.

“A lot of the people that we serve have jobs in the community, so they might need support with getting to work, staying on task, being dressed appropriately for the job, getting ready to go and being successful,” Noppenberger said.

“We help them work if they want to work,” Avery said. “They learn how to handle money, work on being healthier and navigate health matters. And if they want to travel, see things or do activities, we help with all of that.”

Each person’s plan, Noppenberger and Avery said, is tailored to

meet specific needs, as each person’s needs will be different.

“Essentially, we’re navigators, cheerleaders, helping to connect people with the resources in their community to be successful,” Noppenberger said.

Noppenberger said that the EOSSB is one of 14 brokerages in Oregon, paid for with state tax dollars and federal funds. It serves 471 people in the counties of Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, Wheeler, Morrow, Umatilla, Grant, Harney, Union, Baker, Wallowa and Malheur.

The organization has 30 staff members, who are mostly based in their homes, near the people they serve. The EOSSB’s one office is in Hood River.

As EOSSB employees live near the people they serve, they said, they are better able to assess their needs and help them.

The Smalleys said they are grateful for this help.

**COUNTY**

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put in their bodies as asking about whether vaccination mandates were right. They largely agreed they were not.

“No. No. No,” Timmons said.

Beers and Bonifer referenced the Nuremberg trials and a necessary stand against tyranny. Others said it was an issue of choice, with some variation in regards to the need for choices to benefit society.

The other questions were met with the same amount of agreement, most often with each candidate giving opinions that related back to stances of personal freedoms and limited government.

Speaking to their opinion on critical race theory, for example, candidates were unified in their opposition, with Beers saying that it “causes segregation” and Bonifer stating it “causes division.” They all said parents should have the right to teach on this topic, not schools.

They also sided on individual or local choice when it came to where children would attend school, and whether vouchers should be given to families. Some candidates pointed out that this and the question about critical race theory were not really a county commissioner issue.

More relevant to their campaigns, candidates were asked for their opinions on the most important issue or role for county commissioners.

Bonifer emphasized transparency, speaking on the need for officials to stand up for what is right. Addressing mental health and drug use are two important issues, he said.

Bower spoke on the importance of workforce development, as well as tackling redundancy in government.

Nelson said family was the most important thing, and government needs to promote efforts that will support families.

Timmons said government needs to make sure people are getting the services they require. Elder care and veteran services, for instance, are needed, she said.

Young argued for the need for infrastructure, medical services and better roads.

Beers said there was need for the county to address drug use, mental health, veteran care, homelessness and crime.

Pullen spoke of farmers and the importance of helping ease burdens created by excessive legislation.

Shafer stated there are problems of drug use and homelessness that need to be solved through new and existing services.

Barton said he wished for programs that would encourage youth engagement, giving young people opportunities to learn and stay out of trouble.

At the end, they met each other and visitors to the forum, nodding as candidate Young said, “We have the same agenda” and they all want to do what is best for Umatilla County.



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