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Heart of Oregon gets \$329,000 allocation

Funding solidifies regional Americorps organization

Teart of Oregon Corps will receive \$329,000 in LAmeriCorps funding over the year from the Corporation for National and Community Service, the federal agency responsible for Ameri-Corps and other national service programs.

The funding will support Heart of Oregon AmeriCorps service on public lands throughout Central Oregon. The grant is renewable for two subsequent years, for a total of almost \$1 million in

As members of HOC Ameripeople ages 17-24 serve on natural resource conserva-

— providing essential support to public land agencies and local parks.

Crews are based out of HOC's Bend and Prineville offices. Members earn an AmeriCorps living allowance as they tackle life goals and gain work experience and soft skills.

At the completion of their service terms, young people also earn a Segal Education Award from AmeriCorps to put toward future college or to pay off student loans. HOC is accepting applications for their 53 AmeriCorps positions

"Building on our nation's strong tradition of neighbor helping neighbor, Ameri-Corps members will change Corps, crews of local young lives, improve communities, and build a safer, stronger, and more united America," tion projects, such as fire fuels said Chester Spellman, direcreduction, trail maintenance, tor of AmeriCorps. "For 25

and invasive species reduc- years, the AmeriCorps members who pledge to 'get things done' have represented the best of America while demonstrating the great promise and ideals of our country. I salute all the AmeriCorps members who will join them and congratulate Heart of Oregon on their 2019 Ameri-Corps grant."

Heart of Oregon is one of just four organizations in Oregon to receive AmeriCorps funding through CNCS this cycle and is the only Central Oregon organization to receive the state competitive

Heart of Oregon leverages the funding with additional support from project partners, including the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, Deschutes County, Bend Park and Recreation District, Crook County Parks and Recreation District, and state grants from Oregon

Youth Conservation Corps.

'Before AmeriCorps, I dreaded even ordering food because I didn't want to speak to the cashier," said recent AmeriCorps graduate Elijah, of Bend. "Now, I teach new corps members skills and go out of my way to start a conversation — just because I want to. Joining Heart of Oregon was probably the best decision of my life, and I

Including AmeriCorps, Heart of Oregon Corps runs six programs that provide job skills training, education, and leadership development to more than 300 local young people each year, ages 16-24, who face major barriers to success. Heart of Oregon aims to empower a generation of young people to believe in themselves and achieve selfwouldn't be the same without sufficiency. Youths can apply

at heartoforegon.org.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of AmeriCorps. Since the program's inception in 1994, more than 1 million Americans have served their country through the national service program.

In 2018 alone. **Heart of Oregon AmeriCorps** members improved nearly **2,000** acres of public lands and 23 miles of trails and waterways throughout

Central Oregon.

From left to right,

the crew includes

specialist Alyssa

Whited, corps

transition

members

Thyreicia,

Thomas, and

Hayden, and project

Vanderbeck.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

coordinator Sam

Organizations are currently recruiting for AmeriCorps members to begin service this fall. Those interested in serving can learn more at Ameri-Corps.gov/Join.

Point-in-Time: a homelessness spike

Homeless count reflects a 12% increase over 2018

According to results of the 2019 Point-in-Time Count, an annual one-night census of people experiencing homelessness in Jefferson, Crook and Deschutes counties and for the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, the number of homeless in Central Oregon surveyed rose to 880 from 787 last year — a 12% increase.

The board of the Homeless Leadership Coalition stated, "The fact that homelessness is rising in the midst of a strong economy should be a warning sign to all of us that we still have a homeless crisis in Central Oregon. Every community in Central Oregon is affected. It is unacceptable that hundreds of our fellow citizens — children, parents, veterans, and others are unsheltered every night. We need a united regional effort to build affordable and supportive nousing and a willingness to invest in innovative

The numbers include people who met HUD's definition of homelessness — people living in shelters, transitional housing programs, or in a place not meant for human habitation on Jan. 23. Participation in the

survey is voluntary. In June, the coalition will release city and county level data along with additional information about people atrisk of homelessness, access to health care and causes of homelessness. HLC is currently scheduling community meetings, which will take place over the coming months to share local data.

Drilling down into the numbers, approximately 70% of Central Oregon homeless were unsheltered, a number in line with recent years. That includes an increase of 15% in the number of unsheltered families (from 165 in 2018 to 189 in 2019).

The number of homeless children under 18 years old increased 19%, from 124 last year to 147. Among those children, 20 were unaccompanied.

A total of 160 individuals reported being chronically homeless — for over a year — an increase of 15%, which is slightly higher than the rate of increase for the overall homeless popu-

In line with past years, economic factors continue to be the number one issue cited by survey participants as a barrier to finding adequate housing. Unemployment was the second most reported factor.

To review the data summary from the January 2019 count or to learn how to connect with agencies and efforts in your community, visit http://co-

For more information, contact coalition co-chairman James Cook at 618-610-1405, 01 coalition coordinator, George Myers at 612-419-6408.

Homeless Leadership Coalition

The Central Oregon Homeless Leadership Coalition is a collaboration of community partners in Jefferson, Crook and Deschutes counties and he Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs engaging the community through education, advocacy, planning, prioritization and accountability for services to persons experiencing homelessness.

The coalition includes more than 40 organizations that represent a diverse group of interests, unified by a common focus: a Central Oregon where everyone has a safe, stable place to call

MAC: Record months noted

"We focus

always on the

Jim Weyermann

MAC Executive

Director

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around the time the budget committee was considering a proposal to eliminate the aquatics manager position and reduce the district's subsidy of the swim team.

"He's been a good coach, it seems like. He's a good asset to the community, in my opinion. I don't understand what his status is, if he's completely gone as a coach, if he's resigned or if there's some sort of a plan to bring him back in a coaching role,' Affeldt said.

MACRD Executive Director Jim Weyermann responded that there are no hard feelings between him and Nelson and that he would be open to rehiring

"There's a lot of conjecture and misinformation about what actually happened," Weyermann said before board Vice Chairman Greg Tippett, who was running right, and the meeting in the absence of I'm going to Chairwoman Jinnell Lewis, do it tomorinterrupted to say that it was row. I'm gonot appropriate to discuss a personnel matter in a public time because

meeting. Michele Gemelas used her allotted five minutes to make a plea for better communication with the public. "You need to go to Kiwanis. You need to go to Rotary. Please be out there. Put stuff in the paper and let folks know what's going on.'

Swimming lessons missed

Several speakers referenced the fact that the district is no longer providing swimming lessons for all School District 509-J third graders as well as a recent conflict between the MACRD and the Kids Club that resulted in Kids Club temporarily busing members to Redmond to swim.

that the school district can-himself as a former construcceled the swimming lessons tion consultant before caufor third graders, not the MACRD. He said he and the a proposed loan from Jeffer-MACRD board of directors had asked the school district to reconsider and that he has not given up on resuming the lessons in the future.

the MAC and the Kids Club have worked out an agreement on a reduced rate for Kids Club and that Kids Club has not been taking kids to Redmond for some time now.

In response to Nancy Richard's comment that she the infrastructure," Weyerhadn't seen as much of Weyermann as she had of past MAC directors, Weyermann said, "You're right. We should

meeting. I should have called one earlier. Abtalk about the successes." solutely ing to set a you're absolutely correct.

have an open

audience members for clarification on the open meeting, Weyermann said, "I'd love to be able to sit down and talk to anyone in here. I don't approach people when they're at the pool because I figure they're doing what they're doing or they're with their family. But of everyone in here, aside from Nancy (Richards) and some of the people in the back, nobody's knocked on my door either, so we need to change that and it's my job to do it and I'm happy to do it."

Reed, signed up to speak dur-

tioning the board regarding son County that will be used to remodel the aquatic center's bathrooms. The MACRD plans on bor-

rowing as much as needed, Weyermann also said that up to \$250,000, to pay for remodeling the aquatic center's bathrooms, which Weyermann says is long overdue.

'We've had some major issues with the wall panels in the men's and women's bathrooms. Water is getting into mann said. The water is from leakage and condensation from the pipes inside the

The amount of the loan is not yet known because the problems and we rarely district is still collecting bids. The amount will be determined pius are in and Reed advised the

board to borrow enough When asked by one of the to cover the cost should the damage inside the walls turn out to be worse than expect-

County loan beneficial

Weyermann credits County Administrator Jeff Rasmussen with the idea for the loan, which has a five-year term and will cost about 3% interest. To pay off the loan, the MACRD will pay \$54,000 a year from its operating funds for five years.

"It helps us a lot. We couldn't do the fix without their help. It was Jeff Ras-Only one person, Steven mussen who came up with a funding strategy that actual-

Weyermann explained meeting. Reed identified ernment," Weyermann said. The work will be done while the pool is shut down for its annual maintenance period in September. Weyer-

mann expects it will be com-

plete by October.

The loan for the bathroom remodel is the second of two separate loans the MACRD will take from the county.

The first, approved by the county commissioners on May 1, is a \$200,000 operating loan from the county that will be available as needed between now and the first of January.

Weyermann expects that this fiscal year's money will be used up by September, when next fiscal year's tax revenue is just beginning to come in, and that's why the MAC will need to borrow. By January, the bulk of the district's tax revenue will have been received and the MACRD will be able to repay the county.

Revenue ideas floated

Throughout the budgeting once all the process, the committee has considered several proposals one is approved. made by Weyermann to raise revenue and bolster the MACRD's operating funds, including installing a basic fitness room, putting in a concession stand, expanding facility rentals, increasing merchandise sales, contracting with a grant writer to bring in more foundation money, and selling advertising space on the aquatic center premises.

Discussion during the May 13 budget committee meeting revolved around whether the revenue projections for the proposals are realistic or whether they should be revised downward and offset by cuts in other areas.

As time ran out, the committee decided to meet again before voting to recommend a budget to the MACRD

Despite the challenges, Weyermann remains optimistic about the MACRD's potential.

For one thing, participation has been increasing in the MACRD's out-of-water activities. "We focus always on the problems and we rarely talk about the successes," Weyermann said.

"We had a record December in the history of the MAC and we had a record March in terms of revenue generation from visitation in a combination of pool activities and out-of-water activities. We're up a little over 15 1/2% in total participation in outof-water programs. That's our winter basketball program and our current flag football program," Weyermann said.

Weyermann also sees an opportunity to raise revenue by hosting as many as five, or even 10, Little League and soccer tournaments at Juniper Hills Park per year.

"I have never seen a complex as good as Juniper Hills ever — for outdoor baseball and soccer tournaments. The concessions, the RV camping, the movie nights, the cross promotion to the MAC for the kids to come over and swim. This is a great opportunity," Weyermann said.

