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Klamath Falls City Schools

District Newsletter

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Education: A Key Community Health Issue

In a recent national study on county health, Klamath County was rated number 32 of the 33 Oregon counties for which information was available (with 33 being the lowest). The link for the study can be found below. What does the Basin need to do to improve this ranking?

An article that appeared in the January 2012, issue of Scientific American Magazine (p. 28-30) gives us a good clue. They report that researchers who rate counties identify education as one of the key factors in county rankings. Here is a quote from the article:

*“...the evidence that socioeconomic factors like education play a major role in health is solid and growing. For example, high school dropouts tend to die earlier than graduates. Further, their children are more likely to be born prematurely, robbing another generation of a healthy start. Every year of additional education improves those outcomes. **Research is now showing that many health effects once attributed to racial differences are actually tied to educational and economic disparities...**” p. 30.*

For companies determining where to place their operations, and for professionals deciding where to move their families, the health rating of a county plays a part, probably a big part, in the decision. Therefore, it is not a stretch to say that an investment in education has a direct impact on the economics and desirability of an area. To put it bluntly, if citizens want to bring jobs and people to the Klamath Basin, support for local public schools is critical.

One could say that investing in local education is not something one does for the kids; rather, it is done out of self-interest. Financially supporting local schools is not a donation for children, it is an investment in community health and competitive positioning with other counties. Without such investment, the community cannot expect to grow and improve. An adequately funded educational system is one of the key variables in the formula that produces a great city. It is safe to say there is no great or healthy community that does not support its schools.

In conclusion, the choice to adequately fund local schools is not just one between creating better or worse futures for local children. Even more so, it is a choice between creating a thriving or a dying area. This is the decision each community must make as it decides whether or not to invest in its schools. It will be interesting to see which way Klamath Falls decides on this issue. The future health and attractiveness of the community hinges on this critical

decision. A key question must be asked, “Do the citizens of Klamath Falls want their county to stay at the bottom of the list of healthy, and as a result, desirable counties?”

To simplify this newsletter to the bare essentials: A community that cares about kids is one that draws people and businesses. A community that cares about kids is a good place to live.

Did you know?

- The national state-by-state study ranking county health can be found at the following link: <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/oregon/klamath>
- KU’s unique relationship with OIT is partly due to geography. Their proximity to OIT makes it possible for students to take college classes for part of their day at OIT and return to the high school for classes the remainder of the day. They are the only high school in town that has a location that makes this practical for students.
- Last year, KU students earned 1,651 college credits from OIT, KCC, and SOU. OIT charged KU students \$25 per credit (no charge for free-and-reduced lunch students). KCC awarded their credits at no charge and SOU charged \$30 per credit.
- KU is the only high school in the area to offer DECA. This program teaches business and entrepreneurial skills. The KU DECA program is state renowned and their students annually score near the top in state competitions.
- The average home in Klamath Falls has an assessed value of \$106,000. The proposed \$.50 levy will cost that average homeowner \$53 per year.
- If the Klamath Falls City Schools’ local option levy proposal (\$.50 per 1,000 of property) passes in May, KFCS will still have the lowest educational tax in Oregon for districts of more than 2,000 students. Their \$3.11 per 1,000 tax rate is about half the state average.
- Junior Achievement provides volunteers to KFCS to teach financial and work-related skills to students of all ages. They have a very effective program now provided to junior high students at Ponderosa. The organization is short of volunteer presenters for this program and need seven more by April 5. If you are interested in helping, please read the attached information about the opportunity.
- KFCS was recently awarded a \$1.4 million seismic-improvement grant from the State of Oregon. These dollars are specifically to improve the Mills Auditorium and will help make the auditorium structurally sound in the case of an earthquake. The district also hopes to make the auditorium more attractive. As part of this project, KFCS would like to rebuild the 800 seats – a cost of \$55 per seat. Because the seats are not covered by the grant funds, the district is asking for donors to help for only \$25 a seat. Donors will be recognized for their generosity. These funds need to be raised by the last day of school, June 14, 2012. That means there are only 97 days left if you are thinking of donating. For more about what’s happening at Mills Auditorium, visit the website (www.kfalls.k12.or.us). Please call Shaw Nee at 541-883-4700 Ext 1 if you would like more information about donating a seat.