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New staff at **Big Brothers Big Sisters Central Oregon** (BBBSCO) will support existing mentoring matches, reignite the program in Madras and Jefferson County and better serve the Latino community in all of Central Oregon.

Nancy Dodge-Diaz helped launch Big Brothers Big Sisters in Jefferson County in 2005 and continued until 2015. During that time, she was elected to the Culver City Council and then became Mayor, a position she held until 2020. Dodge-Diaz came out of retirement to relaunch BBBSCO in Jefferson County in May 2021. She has a passion for helping our youth reach their potential in life. For more than 20 years, Dodge-Diaz has been a volunteer with Jefferson County Fire District as an emergency medical responder. She enjoys spending time with family, and plans to travel with her husband when not working. She spends her spare time sewing baskets, bowls and making quilts.

Francía Schlundt-Rojas moved to Central Oregon from Venezuela seven years ago and pursued a career as a certified nursing assistant. She enjoyed this experience but felt the need to help more people in the Hispanic community; and took a position with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Oregon. She will be working with our Spanish-speaking mentors and families to help support their matches. She has three awesome kids, enjoys cooking and loves spending time with family and friends.

Bri Kiso grew up in the major Portland, Oregon area. She moved to Corvallis, Oregon where she achieved her bachelor of arts in sociology with a minor in criminal justice. She worked for a few years as a general administrator at a construction company before moving to Bend, where she worked as a peer support specialist with Intensive Youth Services for Deschutes County Behavioral Health. She now works part time with BBBSCO as one of our match support specialist. She enjoys gardening in her back yard, camping, hiking with her doggies and cooking delicious meals.

David Rivera moved to Redmond in 2007, and spent most of his childhood as a Redmond native. He started off working in retail and has over six years of customer service experience throughout his time in Central Oregon. He moved to Eugene, Oregon and completed his bachelor's degree in psychology in 2019 then returned to Central Oregon to start giving back to the community. He is currently a mentor with the Deschutes County Sheriff's department's Central Oregon Partnerships for Youth (COPY) program, providing support and assistance to the children of inmates, a research assistant with the University of Oregon's Stress Neurobiology and Prevention (SNAP) lab studying how early stressful experiences impact the development of key neurobiological regulatory systems and a crisis counselor with the crisis text line. He hopes to attend graduate school in the near future to obtain a degree either in clinical counseling or clinical psychology. He now works full-time as the enrollment and match specialist for BBBSCO. He enjoys reading, gaming with friends and the outdoors.

Local children in foster care now have 14 more **Court Appointed Special Advocates** (CASA) volunteers advocating for them. On October 28, 14 new CASA volunteers were sworn in remotely by Judge Bethany Flint.

The CASA volunteers represent the child's best interest in court and in the community during their time in foster care. All volunteers complete a thorough training process that includes 40 hours of trauma-informed training, a background check and an interview with a Judge before being sworn-in as an officer of the court and assigned a child or sibling group currently in foster care in Crook, Deschutes or Jefferson counties.

Last year, 407 children spent time in foster care in Central Oregon. More than 350 of these children were served by a CASA volunteer. The goal of CASA of Central Oregon is to recruit, train and support enough volunteers so that every child in foster care has a personally assigned CASA volunteer.

CASA of Central Oregon trains and supports volunteers to serve children in foster care in Crook, Deschutes and Jefferson counties. CASA volunteers are adults from many different backgrounds who are dedicated to advocating for abused and neglected children.

CASA of Central Oregon is currently accepting applications for anyone interested in becoming a volunteer advocate.



Washington Trust Bank has hired **Craig Chenoweth** to serve as vice president and relationship manager within the bank's commercial banking division in Bend. Chenoweth comes to Washington Trust Bank with experience in banking and a 17-year history in planning and development for the City of Bend.

Chenoweth joins Washington Trust Bank from H.A. McCoy Engineering & Surveying, where he spent the past year as a project manager. Before his time at H.A. McCoy Engineering & Surveying, Chenoweth worked for U.S. Bank as a commercial banking business relationship manager, specializing in commercial real estate, construction projects and investment portfolio management. Chenoweth also spent 17 years with the City of Bend as

a development services manager and planner, responsible for overseeing the local real estate entitlement process, city policy and operations and served as a liaison for the business community.

A graduate of the University of Oregon, where he earned a bachelor of science in political science, Chenoweth spends time volunteering within his community. Chenoweth serves as a board member for Building a Better Bend and is active on advisory boards for the City of Bend.

The bank is currently serving Bend and Central Oregon customers at a temporary office space in The Collective NWX, located at 2900 NW Clearwater Dr., Ste. 200, while our new financial center at 1203 NW 3rd St. is under construction.

AKS Engineering & Forestry, LLC (AKS) welcomes five new employees to the company: **Tim Hollenbeck, Tyler Joki, Julie Marquis, Matt Steigleder** and **Paul Stull III**.

Hollenbeck, PLS, is a Washington-registered professional land surveyor, drone specialist and FAA-certified Remote Pilot. He earned a bachelor of arts in geography at Western Washington University and brings 22 years of experience in traditional and high-tech surveying for residential and commercial land development to AKS' Vancouver office.

Joki comes to AKS with 13 years of experience in natural resources conservation and project management. He has worked for private engineering groups and local and federal agencies in the Portland, Oregon area with a focus on wetlands restoration, aquatic resources monitoring and feasibility assessment of environmentally sensitive projects. He is also a licensed landscape contractor and holds a BS in biology from Portland State University.

Marquis recently joined the AKS as marketing proposal manager. Marquis has broad experience across the architecture, engineering and construction industry. She has 13 years of marketing expertise under her belt, nine of which were acquired with engineering firms. Marquis brings strong leadership, strategic planning, communications and research abilities to the AKS marketing team.

Steigleder, PE, is a project manager and transportation engineer with nine years' experience designing and managing urban and rural roadway projects. Steigleder earned his bachelor of science in civil engineering at Oregon State University. He has extensive experience working on traffic engineering projects for the Oregon Department of Transportation, working on every part of the process from conceptual design alternatives through construction support.

Stull, PE, has joined the AKS team in Tualatin as a project engineer. Stull holds a bachelor of science in civil engineering



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CASA VOLUNTEER SWEARING IN | PHOTO COURTESY OF CASA

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and an master's in environmental engineering from Oregon State University. He has nearly 30 years' combined experience managing commercial, industrial, private and public projects, with a focus on environmental and water resources. He is a licensed environmental engineer in Oregon, Washington and Alaska.

Street Dog Hero welcomes **Diana Fischetti** as its first executive director. Along with her lifelong commitment to nonprofit service, Fischetti brings 11 years of experience in executive leadership, 15 years in marketing and communications and nine years in fundraising to her new role at Street Dog Hero, where she will provide strategic direction and operational oversight to the organization as it serves dogs in need around the world and their communities through rescue, adoption, wellness, spay-neuter and education.

Most recently, Fischetti served as the director of development and marketing at United Way of Central Oregon (2017-2021). Prior, she co-founded, co-owned and led the operations of Broken Top Bottle Shop (2010-2016). Currently, she volunteers on the Boards of Directors of Kôr Community Land Trust and OUT Central Oregon. As a lover of people, pets and the planet, Fischetti earned a master's of geography, a master's of environmental studies and a graduate certificate in nonprofit management from the University of Oregon in 2008. She moved to Bend in 2004 and continues to enjoy skiing, backpacking, hiking, camping, live music and extended dog walks with her spouse and three rescue pups.

The Board of Directors of the **Central Oregon Health Council** (COHC) has announced that Executive Director **Donna Mills** will step down by June 30, 2022. Mills has served as the executive director of COHC since 2015 when she relocated from Colorado, where she served as the CEO of Integrated Community Health Partners with extensive experience in finance and operations in the health care sector.

Mills took the helm of COHC at a time when the organization was beginning to expand its role as the community governing board of the coordinated care organization (CCO) for Central Oregon. Since then, Mills has:

- Overseen the disbursement of more than \$25 million in funding into community organizations, providers and projects to improve the quality and costs of providing health care and related social services in the region
- Pivoted the work of the COHC during the COVID-19 pandemic to support health care providers and nonprofit organizations, both financially and in helping to coordinate crisis response, including building a regional resource website
- Unveiled Central Oregon Health Data, a new community health data website, in partnership with the public health departments of Deschutes, Jefferson and Crook Counties and Oregon Health and Science University
- Managed an extensive investment portfolio and transitioned the organization to a grant management platform
- Served as a leader and resource in the State of Oregon to other regions establishing their own health councils
- Been invited to educate and share the benefits of the unique Central Oregon Health Council model at conferences around the country

Mills has been praised for her clear-sighted leadership, strategic guidance, innovative thinking, financial acumen and skill at bringing disparate partners to the table to recognize and achieve common goals.

In our 25th Anniversary year, **STEELE Associates Architects** of Bend announces that **Chris Thome** has been promoted to principal.

Thome was born in Iowa and graduated from North Dakota State University with a bachelor of architecture and a bachelor of science in environmental design. He is a highly skilled architect who leads a team working on mixed-use, senior, medical, public, and commercial projects in multiple states. Thome is a registered architect in Oregon, Washington and Montana.



Applications Welcome for New Ten-Month Creative Writing Program

Three Central Oregon writers are accepting applications for The Forge Writing Program, an online creative writing program beginning January of 2022. The program is designed for people who want the rigor and community of a graduate creative writing program, but are looking for an accelerated pace and lower cost.

"In our 40 combined years of teaching, we've encountered many writers who want to take themselves seriously and really live the writer's life, but they don't necessarily want or need an academic credential, or the high cost of a master's program," said Michael Cooper, who founded the program with fellow writers and teachers Irene Cooper and Ellen Santasiero. "We like to say that we got our MFAs so our participants don't have to."

Through bi-weekly workshops, individual mentorships and feedback from instructors and peers, the program guides small cohorts of writers to generate writing, acquire and improve

craft skills and revise a body of work in fiction or creative nonfiction.

At the end of the program, each writer will experience a personal and in-depth conference during which the instructors will give their full intention to discussing the work, the writer's experience and future possibilities.

In the interest of inspiring ownership and authority in one's own work, as well as supporting a practice of ongoing literary citizenship, a public reading/sharing of each writer's work, in person or online, is a component of completion of the course.

About the Instructors

The only thing Ellen Santasiero likes better than making essays, memoirs, collages, plays, fictions and safe spaces for learning is making them with others. Her work has appeared in *The Stay Project*, *The Sun*, and *High Desert Journal*, among others. She taught literature and writing at OSU-Cascades from 2007-2021, and memoir writing at The Bend Writers Workshop in 2019-2020. (ellensantasiero.com)

Irene Cooper writes poems, reviews, essays and fiction. She works and teaches in community in Central Oregon. *Committal*, a speculative spy-fy novel about family, was published in 2020. Her debut full-length book of poetry, *spare change*, came out with *Finishing Line Press* in March 2021. (irenecooperwrites.com)

Mike Cooper holds an MFA from Oregon State University Cascades in Bend, where he lives with his family. Mike is a writer of fiction and an editorial coach. His short stories have been finalists in *Glimmer Train*, *The Lascaux Review*, and *Cutthroat*. He is president of the Central Oregon Writers Guild and teaches writing at Central Oregon Community College and Oregon State University-Cascades, as well as creative writing workshops through *Blank Pages Workshops*, *Deschutes Public Library* and *COCC Community Learning*.

To register: theforgewriting.com/contact.

More information and free 15-minute conference: theforgewriting@gmail.com, or [theforgewriting.com](http://theforgewriting.com/theforgewriting.com)

Businesses Serving Community



PHOTO | COURTESY OF RIMROCK TRAILS TREATMENT SERVICES

RIMROCK TRAILS TREATMENT SERVICES

Rimrock Trails Treatment Services is tremendously grateful to receive \$12,000 in grant funds from the United Way of Central Oregon (UWCO). Funding from the UWCO ensures that individuals with little to no insurance covering the full cost of treatment or with a high deductible can still access mental health services.

Nearly 40 percent of folks in Central Oregon were living on the edge BEFORE the COVID-19 pandemic — that's more than 37,000 of our 97,000 households. Families living on the edge made up: 56 percent of Crook County, 35 percent of Deschutes County and 53 percent of Jefferson County's households. Over the last ten years, those identified as members of the poor and working poor classes were increasingly priced out of survival because the cost of essentials grew twice that of inflation, and at the same time, low-wage jobs were the jobs that were growing. The state of emergency created by COVID-19 pushed

already fragile households into even deeper financial stress. These are our community members who continue to face the greatest health and financial risks today.

CASCADE YOUTH & FAMILY CENTER

Cow Creek Umpqua Indian Foundation is helping foster kids learn life skills for independent living. One of the difficulties as youth 'age out' of foster care is most suddenly find themselves on their own. Unprepared for self-sufficiency, 30-40 percent will experience homelessness within two years. This is a situation that many youth are never able to find their way out of and can end in chronic homelessness or incarceration.

Cascade Youth & Family Center (CYFC) offers an Independent Living Program, which works to help youth at this very vulnerable stage successfully make this transition. Their case managers help current and former foster kids age 16-20 prepare for adulthood. They offer mentoring and connect them with discretionary funds, housing programs and much more.

The Cow Creek Band of the Umpqua Tribe of Indians recently awarded CYFC's Independent Living Program \$12,000 through their foundation. With the goal of improving the communities in which they live and work, the Cow Creek Umpqua Indian Foundation makes grants to eligible non-profit organizations in communities in Coos, Deschutes, Douglas, Jackson, Josephine, Klamath and Lane counties. This grant will go far to help improve the futures of foster youth in our community.

Cascade Youth & Family Center provides shelter and services to runaway and homeless youth. CYFC programs include crisis intervention and family mediation, emergency shelter, transitional living shelter, independent living and street outreach. CYFC is a program of J Bar J Youth Services.