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J.C. Nore

**Central Oregon Community College (COCC)** has named **J.C. Nore** as the new director of its Small Business Development Center (SBDC), part of the college's Center for Business and Community Education. Nore began his role on April 1.

A longtime Central Oregon resident and business leader, Nore brings more than two decades of experience supporting small businesses, leading teams and building scalable programs across private-sector, nonprofit and community-based environments. As a former business owner, he has worked closely with hundreds of organizations, offering practical guidance on operations, marketing, financial planning and growth strategy.

The COCC SBDC provides no-cost, confidential advising and affordable training to entrepreneurs and small business owners across Deschutes, Jefferson and Crook counties. As part of the statewide Oregon SBDC Network, the center plays a key role in supporting business creation, growth and sustainability throughout the region.

In his new role, Nore will oversee SBDC operations across the college district, including advising services, training programs and community partnerships. He will work closely with local chambers of commerce, economic development organizations and regional partners to ensure that business owners — especially in rural communities — have access to the tools and support they need to succeed.

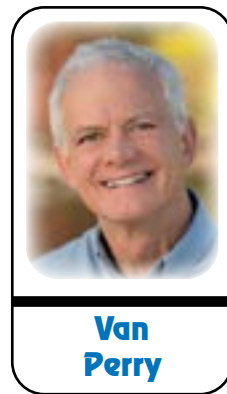
Nore previously served as director of sales at Cascade Graphics and held leadership roles with Dometic, MPS North America, where he managed customer service operations and developed national training programs. Earlier in his career, he founded and led Connexion Printing Consultants, building and ultimately selling a successful business that supported regional commercial and nonprofit clients. In that role, he maintained advisory relationships with 150–200 organizations annually and oversaw thousands of client engagements.

Nore holds a bachelor's degree in government and international affairs from Augustana University and has been actively involved in the Central Oregon community through board and leadership roles with several nonprofit and regional organizations.

**Family Access Network (FAN)** welcomes the newest member to their Board, **Van Perry**.

Perry is a senior executive with more than 30 years of global leadership experience building brands, transforming teams and scaling organizations across industries, including travel and hospitality, outdoor, financial services, technology, real estate and the public sector. Perry has led international rebranding initiatives for Fortune 50 companies, directed Olympic marketing programs for global sponsors, and served as president of two adventure travel companies, delivering expeditions from Antarctica to the Sahara. Earlier in his career, he held leadership roles in real estate development and city government. He has served in multiple executive capacities across many sectors and is excited to lend that skillset to the local community.

A passionate advocate for service-oriented leadership, Perry is focused on building high-performing teams and creating lasting community value. He believes organizations must always start with a clear sense of purpose and that is what he has found with FAN. He holds an MBA from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, an MPA from the University of Georgia and a BS with Distinction from the University of Virginia. He lives in Bend with his wife and is the father of two daughters.



Van Perry



Leigh Capozzi

**Volunteers in Medicine, Clinic of the Cascades (VIM)** announced the hiring of **Leigh Capozzi** as director of philanthropy and community engagement. Capozzi brings more than 20 years of experience with mission-driven brands and a proven track record of leadership across both for-profit and nonprofit organizations.

Most recently, from 2019-2022, Capozzi led marketing and communications for Mt. Bachelor. She recently joined VIM from Protect Our Winters (POW), a leading global nonprofit focused on climate advocacy, where she served as the VP of Marketing and Communications.

Since 2004, VIM has delivered over \$212M in community benefit to uninsured patients, including \$150M in healthcare and \$16M in medications. Hundreds of providers and volunteers have powered this support and, in the past year alone, have served over 500 uninsured patients with nearly \$6.8M in care, services and donated resources.

The **Redmond Library** has formally received LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum certification for its commitment to sustainability. As a framework, LEED is the world's most widely used green building rating system and provides a framework for assessing everything from energy and water use to materials selection and indoor air quality.

The Redmond Library was designed to operate as a net-zero energy building, powered entirely by on-site solar. The library's rooftop photovoltaic array allows the building to generate all the energy it needs.

Buildings constructed to LEED certification ensure electricity cost savings, lower carbon emissions and healthier environments where people live, work, learn and play. In the United States alone, buildings account for almost 40 percent of national CO2 emissions, but according to the U.S. Green Building Council, LEED-certified buildings have 34 percent lower CO2 emissions, consume 25 percent less energy and 11 percent less water, and have diverted more than 80 million tons of waste from landfills.

By building its new construction projects to meet LEED certification—including the Redmond Library and the new Central Library in Bend — Deschutes Public Library is working to contribute to a better standard of living for everyone.

When the new Redmond Library opened in February 2025, its square footage nearly doubled compared to the previous building, yet both the 12-month energy costs and the site's overall electrical use went down. Net electrical use dropped from 276 MWh to 57 MWh, nearly an 80% decrease. That total now also includes electricity used for EV charging.

The LEED Platinum status adds to recent recognition the Redmond Library has received for its design and sustainability. In addition to national recognition from the American Library Association, the library also received a 2025 Building a Better Oregon Award from the Cascades East Association of Realtors. The long-standing awards program honors projects that have made a significant positive impact on their community. Judging criteria include economic benefit, neighborhood improvement, unique design and materials and environmental friendliness.

In November 2020, Deschutes County voters supported the Library's bond measure to expand and improve libraries across the county. In addition to building a new library in Redmond and updating libraries in La Pine, Sisters and Sunriver, bond funds are being used to remodel the Downtown Bend Library (April 2026–spring 2027) and construct new Central Library in Bend, which opens on May 11, 2026.

**Central Oregon Community College (COCC)** announces that students **Julian Hasbun**, **Amanda Payne**, **Colton Sachs** and **Talia Stockwell** have been selected to represent the college on the Oregon Community College Association's 2026 All-Oregon Academic Team, which honors high achievement from Oregon's 17 community colleges.

The students will be celebrated at OCCA's All-Oregon Academic Team luncheon event on Friday, April 17, at Chemeketa Community College in Salem, with community college presidents, board members, faculty and state legislators in attendance.

To earn the distinction, students must demonstrate academic excellence and intellectual rigor combined with leadership and service. A minimum 3.5 cumulative GPA and completion of at least 54 credits is required. Nominated by a faculty member, finalists undergo a review process by the college's committee for academic excellence.

As an addiction counseling and behavioral health student, Hasbun is setting out to help others by becoming a certified alcohol and drug counselor in Oregon, and also planning to pursue a qualified mental health associate credential. His goal is to transfer to a university for a bachelor's degree in either social work or psychology. Hasbun was student-led for a grant-funded, student-led initiative focused on promoting harm reduction and wellness among college students through reducing binge drinking behaviors.

Payne, a nursing student, spearheaded a mentorship program that pairs new COCC nursing students with students in their second year to support learning outcomes. Serving as nursing club president, she is regarded as a natural leader and caring student by her faculty, contributing to the development of regional clinical partnerships. She was named a 2026 New Century Workforce Pathway Scholar — representing all of Oregon — in a national scholarship program sponsored by the Coca-Cola Foundation and Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society.

Sachs, studying physics, was awarded a full scholarship from the University of Oregon's Oregon Pathways to Industry Research Careers program. In addition to serving as a student member of COCC's student affairs and sustainability committees, he has conducted a summer engineering internship with a biomedical company, served on the institutional review board for a biomechanical research project at Oregon State University-Cascades and volunteered at Pine Mountain Observatory.

Stockwell, whose passion lies in climate and disaster resilience, is an economics student planning to pursue a bachelor's degree in planning and public policy. Serving as president of the Associated Students of COCC, Stockwell also volunteers with the Central Oregon Pet Evacuation Team, providing hands-on assistance during area wildfires. They won first prize in COCC's 2025 Writing Contest in the academic nonfiction category.

Payne and Hasbun, as career and technical education students, will also receive COCC Foundation scholarship support.

The All-Oregon Academic Team is part of the All-State Community College Academic Team program that started in 1994 in the states of Mississippi and Missouri. Today, 38 states host All-State Academic Team programs each year, focusing on two-year colleges and recognizing exceptional students. The OCCA sponsors the annual event, in partnership with the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, which awards some \$37 million in scholarships nationally to community college students.

**Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Oregon (BBBSO)**, a program of J Bar J Youth Services, has been recognized as a Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA) Pinnacle Award Winner for program excellence in 2025. Every year, the BBBSA National Leadership Council, made up of local agency leaders and board members, selects agencies for excellence in the organization's signature 1-to-1 youth mentoring program. Out of more than 230 agencies across the country, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Oregon is one of five organizations to receive this top honor.



Julian Hasbun

Amanda Payne

Colton Sachs

Talia Stockwell

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# Glow Up Your Weekend

by MEGAN BURTON

The REMAX Key Properties Balloons Over Bend is set to return July 24-26, 2026, bringing a weekend of hot air balloon launches, live entertainment, and community celebration to Central Oregon. This signature summer event will feature free sunrise balloon launches each morning, vibrant Night Glow celebrations, and activities for all ages.

"Bend is more than a market to us; it's home," says Tim Buccola, owner, REMAX Key Properties. "Balloons Over Bend captures everything we love about this community: families coming together, the beauty of the high desert, and that unmistakable Central Oregon spirit. As title sponsor, we're proud to help make this event possible and to celebrate the place we're privileged to call home."

The weekend's centerpiece is the Bend Night Glow Celebration on Friday, July 24, at Central Oregon Community College from 5-10pm. Designed with families in mind, the evening features live entertainment, interactive activities, food trucks, and a vibrant marketplace — all leading up to the magical moment when hot air balloons illuminate the night sky.

Kids take center stage at the Balloon Blast Kids Race, a colorful obstacle course designed for ages three to ten and part of the Kid's Rock the Races series. With staggered start times beginning at 6pm, young participants can run, climb, and race their way through a fun and supportive environment while parents cheer from the sidelines.

Throughout the evening, nationally touring performers FlippenOut Extreme Trampoline Show will wow the crowd with gravity-defying flips, wall tricks, and high-energy stunts at 5:30pm and 6:30pm. The excitement continues at 7pm with live music from the Tri-Cities Steel Band Association, whose youth-powered steel drums and African marimbas bring infectious rhythms and global sounds to the stage.

At 8:30pm, balloons roll onto the field, and at sunset, families can gather on blankets as the glowing giants light up the sky in a breathtaking display of color and warmth.

The celebration continues Saturday, July 25, in Redmond at the Redmond Brewfest & Night Glow

at American Legion Park. Hosted by the Redmond Chamber of Commerce, the evening includes craft beverages, live music, vendors, and another stunning balloon glow at dusk.

Each morning of the festival, balloons launch just after sunrise from R.E. Jewell Elementary School in Bend. These launches are free to attend and offer families a peaceful and awe-inspiring way to start the day as colorful balloons rise into the Central Oregon sky.

The REMAX Key Properties Balloons Over Bend presented by Chevrolet of Bend is produced by Lay It Out Events and supported by numerous local partners and sponsors.

Balloons Over Bend also includes opportunities for community involvement through volunteering, vending, and sponsorships. Those interested in booking a balloon ride or applying as a pilot are encouraged to contact [info@layitoutevents.com](mailto:info@layitoutevents.com) for more information.

[balloonsoverbend.com](http://balloonsoverbend.com)

## Who's Who

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This award recognizes the top agencies that have met the Platinum Award requirements for two or more years — meaning they have shown remarkable achievements in retaining the number of mentors ("Bigs") and youth ("Littles") matched through the program and have exhibited exceptional growth in their local programs for multiple, consecutive years. In the past year, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Oregon has served 223 youth.



Ellen Waterston

Governor Tina Kotek has appointed **Ellen Waterston** of Bend to a second term as Poet Laureate of Oregon. A celebrated poet/writer, educator and speaker who founded the Writing Ranch and the Waterston Desert Writing Prize, Waterston will serve a second two-year term ending in August 2028. Waterston is Oregon's 11th Poet Laureate, first appointed to the role in 2024.

In less than two years, Waterston has crisscrossed the state to present 84 poetry readings and workshops in 39 Oregon communities.

In her second term, Waterston plans to pursue two complementary projects in addition to continuing to deliver workshops and presentations. The first, Poetry in Public Places (abbreviated P!PP), encourages communities in Oregon to display poems in unexpected locations, from poetry walks to permanent art installations," she explained. She will explore pathways for poets to engage public art in Oregon and will enlist the involvement of public and private construction and remodeling projects to do the same. In the second project she will share the podium wherever she goes with a young poet from that community. Writing from those poets will be included in an anthology of young Oregon poets with the working title *Meet Me on the Divide*.

Later this year, Waterston will deliver a poem commissioned for the one-hundredth anniversary of the Astoria Column in July, and in August will help welcome U.S. Poet Laureate Arthur Sze for the opening of the new East Bend branch of Deschutes Public Library. For much of Waterston's award-winning poetry and prose is inspired by the remote reaches of southeastern Oregon's outback. Her five poetry titles include the just-released *As Far as I Can Anthem*, featuring poems largely written during her first term as Poet Laureate. Others are *I Am Madagascar*, *Between Desert Seasons*, *Via Lactea* and *Hotel Domilocos*. Waterston is also the author of four literary nonfiction titles: her most recent are *We Could Die Doing This: Dispatches on Ageing from Oregon's Outback* and *Walking the High Desert: Encounters with Rural America Along the Oregon Desert Trail*.

In addition to her work as an author, Waterston founded the for-profit Writing Ranch, which offers retreats and workshops for established and emerging writers, and the Bend-based literary arts nonprofit The Nature of Words, which she directed for over a decade. She subsequently founded the Waterston Desert Writing Prize, annually recognizing a nonfiction book proposal that examines the role of deserts in the human narrative, now a program of the High Desert Museum. She has taught creative writing at middle through graduate school levels and authored the original feasibility study for the OSU-Cascades Low Residency MFA in Creative Writing.

Her work as an author and literary arts advocate was earlier recognized with an honorary Ph.D. in humane letters from OSU-Cascades and, in 2024, with both Literary Arts' Stewart H. Holbrook Award at the Oregon Book Awards and Soapstone's Bread and Roses Award.

Waterston received her BA from Harvard University and MA in archaeology from the University of Madagascar. She has three children and three grandchildren and resides in Bend.

Waterston will begin her second term this August.



MORE THAN 150 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WILL CONVERGE FOR THE CONTEST | PHOTO COURTESY OF COCC

Paying homage to a beloved sci-fi film and its imagined time-travel calculations, the annual High School Math Contest at **Central Oregon Community College (COCC)** is going "Math to the Future" this year, hosting young math minds from across the region to compete in fun challenges on April 16 on the Bend campus.

Costumed math professors playing the parts of "Doc" Brown, Marty McFly and other characters from 1985's *Back to the Future*, along with an original gull-wing DeLorean parked for team photo ops, will bring the theme to life as more than 150 high school students from 13 schools across Central Oregon — from Paisley to Mitchell to Sisters — compete in fun challenges across campus.

The long-running event, first held in 1978, includes a relay race, scavenger hunt and a name-that-tune-styled game. Students compete for prizes and awards.

In advance of college events, persons needing accommodation or transportation because of a physical or mobility disability should contact campus services at 541-383-7775. For accommodation because of other disability such as hearing impairment, contact student accessibility services at [sas@cocc.edu](mailto:sas@cocc.edu) or 541-383-7583.

**Climate Jobs Oregon** recently announced the hiring of Dr. **Anthony Levenda** as its first-ever executive director, positioning the labor-led coalition to help deliver one of the largest infrastructure and workforce expansions in Oregon's history.

Levenda's appointment comes at a pivotal time for Oregon's energy future. Analysis from Cornell University's Climate Jobs Institute shows the state will need to increase transmission capacity by roughly 89% while rapidly scaling clean energy generation and storage to meet rising electricity demand and climate targets.

Levenda joins the organization with more than a decade of experience in research, education, and advocacy focused on equitable clean energy transitions. He most recently served as Director of the Center for Climate Action and Sustainability at The Evergreen State College, where he built the center from the ground up, led strategic planning, and secured major public and private funding. Levenda earned his PhD from Portland State University and has deep roots in Oregon, where he has lived for more than a decade.

Levenda's work has consistently focused on the intersection of climate policy, workforce development, and labor. He served on the Washington State Clean Energy Technology Workforce Advisory Committee and worked with a wide range of partners including Tribal governments, labor organizations, and community groups to advance climate and workforce initiatives.

A union member himself, Levenda is part of a proud union household and brings a personal commitment to advancing good union jobs as a core part of the clean energy economy.

Climate Jobs Oregon is a coalition of labor organizations focused on building a homegrown clean energy economy rooted in high labor standards, workforce training, and long-term economic opportunity. The coalition, which launched in early 2026, is working to ensure Oregon meets its climate goals while strengthening communities and supporting working families.

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