



SPRING 2021 NEWSLETTER

Hello Friends!

We are so grateful for each of you who have volunteered, supported kids and families with tangible items, and started the journey of becoming a foster provider. Each of you matters, and you are all making a difference in our community.

We are also so excited to be celebrating Foster Care Month in May! Foster Care Month is a time to recognize how foster care supports and strengthens families, to honor the experiences of the children and young people in foster care, and to show gratitude for the contributions that resource (foster) families make to the well-being and safety of children and families throughout Oregon.

This month we have Flash Boxes and encouragement going out to foster families across Crook, Deschutes and Jefferson Counties. Also, we're collecting shoes for kids impacted by foster care at 17 different businesses throughout Central Oregon via our first ever Kick-Off Summer Shoe Drive. Our goal is to collect 400 pairs of shoes, one for each kid in Central Oregon impacted by foster care annually.

A few highlights from early 2021:

- Officially launched "Neighborhoods" in January 2021, supporting foster families and engaging volunteers through a new small-group, high-impact model of community.
- 125 volunteers engaged in Quarter 1, 2021!
- 25 new foster inquiries from those wanting to learn more about becoming a foster parent in Quarter 1, 2021.
- 55 new volunteer inquiries in Quarter 1, 2021.

In addition to all our fabulous volunteers, we are so grateful to all our financial partners—your giving has allowed us to add a much-needed team member, Shiann Schmidt. Shiann joins us in the new role of volunteer coordinator (read more, Page 11), which enables us to build structure around volunteering and better engage volunteers with opportunities to help. Please join us in welcoming her!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Melissa Williams'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large 'M' and 'W'.

Melissa Williams / Director
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541.610.945
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BAGS OF THANKS 'INITIATIVE' SPURS BIG SMILES

Some things are just hard to quantify. That's certainly the case when it comes to the hours, passion, energy and expertise invested by Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS). And that's probably why when 150 of their staff received "health and wellness bags" packed with everything from snacks to skin care products and hand-written notes, these tokens of appreciation brought big smiles and tears of joy to some staff members' eyes.



In an email of gratitude sent to Every Child Central Oregon (ECCO), ODHS Social Service Assistant Cheyenne Gardner, wrote, "I'm not sure if you were a part of the gift bags but, if you were or know who is, please send a HUGE THANKS. This week has been one of the hardest that I have had, and this little gift made me cry."

Research shows gratitude in the workplace can be transformative, boosting wellbeing, resilience, and social connection while reducing stress. But how exactly did these gift bags come together?

At the suggestion of ODHS Community Development Coordinator Danielle Grimes, ECCO coordinated a mass effort to collect donations from individuals and local businesses, including Westside Church of Bend, Courtney and Terri MacMilian, DANI Naturals (lotion and lip balm), and humm® Kombucha (cans of kombucha). With the items then collected, mothers and daughters from the National Charity League tackled the gift-bag assembly.

Watching ODHS staff open the bags, Grimes said, "I always wonder if such things really matter, but they sure do—such great stuff!"

No doubt, great stuff for great people...greatness all around!



MARIPOSA REAL ESTATE AND GUILD MORTGAGE OF REDMOND JOIN ECCO'S REAL ESTATE GIVE BACK PROGRAM

Every Child Central Oregon (ECCO) is thrilled to announce the first two of five members selected to join its Real Estate Give Back Program: Mariposa Real Estate Corp., a Redmond-based, Spanish-speaking agency owned by its principal broker, Vanessa Segoviano; and Guild Mortgage—Team Cherie, the Redmond-based, nationally acclaimed lender operated by Cherie Smith in Redmond.

Through the Real Estate Give Back Program, partners give a \$50 donation to ECCO for every transaction closed monthly.

"It's a gift that directly empowers ECCO's financial stability," says Melissa Williams, ECCO's director. "This will help ensure we continue to grow and do important work in foster care services. That said, the Real Estate Give Back Program is limited to five exclusive members. With two spots already taken, we'd love anyone who is in the real estate industry and interested to inquire ASAP."

Ideal partners are real estate agents, financial lenders and title companies. In return for their "closing" contributions, ECCO raises awareness around the charitable efforts with:

- A personal thank-you note/email to their customers for the donation made in their name
- Social media posts (2x per year), highlighting gratitude for the partnership
- One spotlight on the business in ECCO's quarterly newsletter (audience 1,000+)
- Service opportunities for the business's team
- Business logo on OUR PARTNERS page on ECCO's website (for annual donations \$10K+)

To learn more or apply, contact ECCO: m.williams@everychildcentraloregon.org; 541-610-9455.

Mariposa Real Estate Corp.

541.233.8993/541.527.1968/info@mariposarealestate.net

636 NW 6th St. Ste B, Redmond, OR 97756

Mariposarealestate.net



Cherie Smith—Guild Mortgage

Lender Near You at 636 NW Cedar Ave.

503.930.6698

<https://branches.guildmortgage.com/or/redmond/cherie-smith-565-wtcs.html>



Just this spring, Every Child Central Oregon (ECCO) has witnessed many random acts of kindness and generous gifts, helping lift the lives of youth and families experiencing foster care. Here, we spotlight one of the many stories of compassion, plus provide a quick recap of more goodness going 'round.

'Bend Gives' Brings Forward Bikes, Betters Lives

For some kids, a damaged or broken bike can be far more than a big downer. It can mean a broken spirit, a sudden loss of crucial independence, or even the ability to get to school on time.



So when Bend Gives learned a boy's bike had been unexpectedly damaged, the nonprofit stepped in to help. The boy—a youth experiencing foster care—was already being supported through ECCO's "Neighborhoods" program. Through this, a group has formed to rally around him and his foster family, providing tangible and intangible types of kindness.

But a new bike was a harder expense for the group to bear. So Bend Gives, which supports existing non-profits working with children in Central Oregon by communicating current needs and facilitating the collection of these items, stepped in. It spread the news of the need to its members, sourcing a new bike for the boy through anonymous donors, ultimately resulting in three more bikes to gift to other youth in need as well.

As told by Bend Gives' founder, Julie Ross, "Bend Gives' focus is on children in our community, and I can't think of anyone more deserving of our community's support than a child impacted by foster care. I know I am not alone, as is seen through the generous donors who offer to help in truly feeling compassion for a child whose life circumstances may deny them the opportunity for normalcy, like being able to feel the joy of riding a bicycle.

"It fills my heart with gratitude each time I am able through Bend Gives to connect the kindness and generosity, which speaks to so many here in Central Oregon, with an actual child who deserves to feel that they are loved and valued, not only by their foster family but by our community. While I and the many donors who offer to help may never meet the recipients of our gifts, we hold their lives and their stories close to our hearts each day."



MORE GOODNESS GOING 'ROUND...

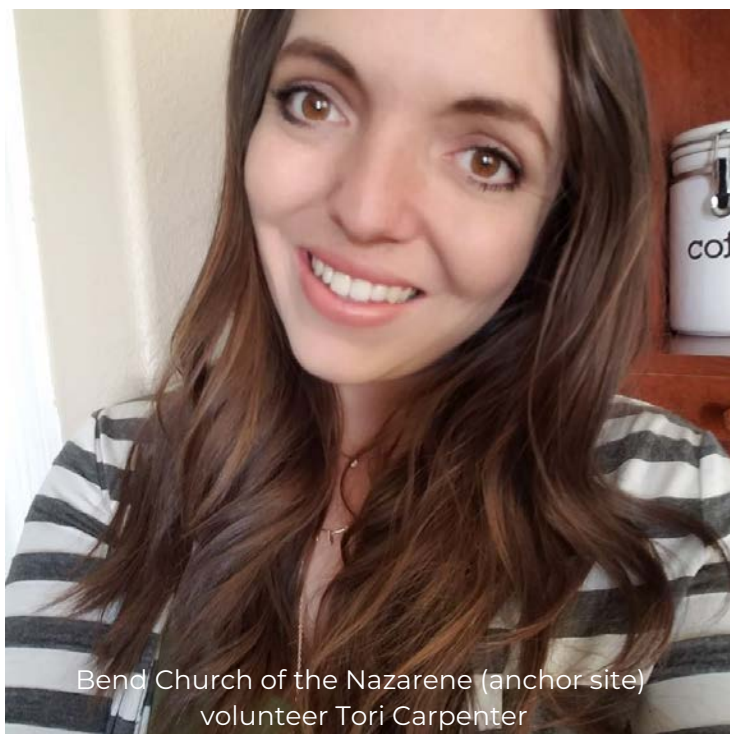
- 1 family reunited in Prineville, supported by a church and local home-goods store with furniture and other items needed for their apartment.
- 1 tablet and hotspot connection donated to youth who aged out of foster care and needed to complete the GED.
- \$300 donation for a teen to purchase a new guitar, a hobby he uses for emotional regulation, staying busy and keeping on a healthy path.
- 1 brand-new stroller for two, donated by Westside Church to a family caring for children with physical/medical limitations.
- Bags of diaper wipes, baby equipment and baby clothes donated to current providers who agreed to take on the sibling of those already in their care.

Help Someone in YOUR Back Yard.
Join MyNeighbOR Today!
www.everychildcentraloregon.org/myneighbor

MYNEIGHBOR NETWORK: BIGGER AND BETTER!

Every Child Central Oregon's (ECCO) MyNeighbOR program continues to evolve, becoming bigger, better and, in particular, more effective every day.

MyNeighbOR—which mobilizes caring community members to meet the unique, pressing and tangible needs of families experiencing foster care—now has more anchor sites throughout the region, expanding its impact to better meet the needs of vulnerable families beyond just Bend and Deschutes County.



Bend Church of the Nazarene (anchor site)
volunteer Tori Carpenter

“We certainly welcome support in all the areas we serve—Deschutes, Jefferson, Crook and The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs,” says Brie Rogers, ECCO’s Community Investment Coordinator. “However, these additional anchor sites mean people can more directly help those in their back yard, which is a primary goal of the MyNeighbOR program. It’s all about neighbors helping neighbors, having that very immediate, close-to-home impact.”

Just this spring, several communities have set up new anchor sites or extended item drop-off/pick-up hours at current anchor sites, the exchange point for items like clothes, baby items, Flash Boxes, gift cards, funds and more.

New Locations

Prineville Nazarene Church, 780 E. 1st St., Prineville, OR; 541.447.5710;
drop-off/pick-up, Tues & Wed., 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

LINC Madras, 278 8th St., Madras, OR 97741; 541.475.4446;
drop-off/pick-up. Mon.-Wed., 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Extended Hours:

Bend Church of the Nazarene, 1270 NE 27th St., Bend, OR; 541.382.5496;
drop-off/pick-up: Mon.-Thurs., 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

MYNEIGHBOR CON'T



Above: LINC Madras' anchor site volunteers



Thanks to all our current MyNeighbOR anchor sites, plus all the additional and expanding sites as well!!!

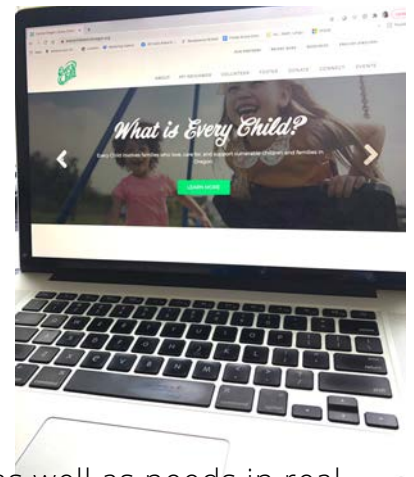
Learn more about My NeighbOR by visiting:
[HTTPS://THECONTINGENT.MICROSOFTCOM/PORTALS/ECO/MY NEIGHBOR/CENTRALOREGON.](https://thecontingent.microsoft.com/portals/eco/myneighbor/centraloregon)

ECCO WEBSITE UPDATES BOOST USER EXPERIENCE

We're excited to announce several improvements made to everychildcentraloregon.org, a few key tech enhancements that are boosting the user experience. The changes include an updated OUR PARTNERS page, which better spotlights and celebrates the various levels of ECCO partnerships—Founding, Business and Faith partners—plus how to contact ECCO about becoming a partner.

Also, the MYNEIGHBOR page is more streamlined to see urgent needs as well as needs in real time, plus it's updated with ALL anchor sites' information. This makes it super easy to see what needs exist and takes the guessing out of where and when items can be dropped off. What's more, under RECENT NEWS, we've added our ANNUAL REPORT and you'll now see a new link for NEWSLETTERS with this first edition that you're reading right now!

Big kudos to Kevin Watkins of Farewell Media (farewellmedia.com) for donating time to these valuable changes. Thank you!





STEPPIN' UP TO HELP

To all who've stepped up to help us collect essential and inspirational donations for our youth and families in foster care to those who've participated in major outreach efforts, like the National Charity League that assembled our ODHS thank-you gift bags, we'd like to say thank you.

This spring and in light of National Foster Care Awareness Month, we'd also like to highlight the amazing support of First Interstate Bank and its employees, who've graciously agreed to help host our first-ever kids' shoe drive. Along with the support of several other amazing businesses in our region, First Interstate Bank has put out collection bins all over Central Oregon to help us reach our goal of collecting 400+ pairs of shoes. (Read more, Page 9.)

Every Child Central Oregon could not achieve its mission without its volunteers, whether individuals or those from businesses, fellow nonprofits or our faith-based partners. As part of our effort to better build and coordinate our volunteer program, we've taken the proactive step of hiring our first-ever volunteer coordinator, Shiann Schmidt. (Read more, Page 11.)

With this new position, approved by our board just this spring, we'll be able to put more structure around our current program, plus make important changes going forward. This new position and opportunity to improve our volunteer efforts would not be possible without the continued funding and donations from our partners and other supporters. We are eternally grateful to you for all your charity around and compassion for everything ECCO does!

ECCO KICKS OFF SUMMER SHOE DRIVE! 'SOLE' PURPOSE? 400 NEW SHOES TO MEET CENTRAL OREGON NEED



Last year, approximately 400 youth within Crook, Jefferson and Deschutes Counties, as well as The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, spent at least one night in foster care. Expecting numbers to exceed that 2021 figure, Every Child Central Oregon (ECCO) is asking people region-wide to donate new shoes, which will go directly to kids impacted by foster care.

ECCO has kicked off the drive and other fundraising activities this May, timing it to coincide with National Foster Care Awareness Month. Local businesses throughout Central Oregon have stepped up to help.

"As a trusted community bank and partner, we understand the importance of supporting our children and championing efforts like the Shoe Drive for Every Child Central Oregon," said Jamie Rockafellor, Retail Hub Manager for First Interstate Bank in Redmond. "We are humbled and honored to participate in this impactful event. Hats-off to all the volunteers and staff with the Shoe Drive working to support and celebrate children in our community."

The shoe collection bins, placed at 11 First Interstate Banks throughout the region, plus other businesses, are located as follows:

Redmond: *Proust Coffee* (235 SW 6th Street); *SCP Redmond Hotel* (521 SW 6th Street); *First Interstate Bank* (154 SW 6th Street)

Bend: *Elite Medi Spa/Drew Family Dentistry* (same building, 2215 NW Shevlin Park Road, Ste 100); *The Haven Co-working Space*, (1001 SW Disk Drive); *Thump Coffee* (25 NW Minnesota Ave. and 549 NW York Drive, Ste 200); and six *First Interstate Bank* locations (1700 NE 3rd Street, 1100 NW Wall Street, 2630 NE Hwy 20, 200 SW Century Drive, 61250 S HWY 97, and 1070 NW Bond Street)

Madras: First Interstate Bank (1150 US-97)

Prineville: First Interstate Bank (555 NW 3rd Street)

Sisters: First Interstate Bank, (272 E Main Avenue)

Sunriver: First Interstate Bank (57150 Beaver Drive)

In addition to the shoe drive, ECCO is excited to announce the success of a recent fundraiser at **MOD Pizza** in Bend, which donated 20% of proceeds to be turned into gift cards given to foster providers.

And last but not least, also in May, several faith community partners plus the **Rotary Group of Bend** and **Hayden Homes of Redmond** (2464 SW Glacier Place #110) donated Flash Boxes, boxes of fun activities and other helpful items of support and encouragement for foster care providers. **Westside Church of Bend** collected items for its Flash Boxes, too—part of its dedicated efforts to help ECCO! Learn more through the church's outreach webpage: <https://westsidechurch.org/outreach/>. Thank you all!!! (Read more, Page 12.)



Thump Coffee staff point out where to drop off new, donated shoes.



WELCOME TO THE ECCO TEAM!

Shiann Schmidt, Volunteer Coordinator

Striving to keep pace with the demands met through our mission, Every Child Central Oregon (ECCO) keeps growing! With that, we invite you to help welcome the newest member of the ECCO team, Shiann Schmidt.

Shiann is a native Oregonian, having been raised on a small farm in Monroe. Growing up, she learned the ropes of the farm and worked jobs in high school bucking hay and driving a combine. Her time on the family farm instilled in her a love for animals—she was deeply involved in 4H, showing prize animals and growing her skills in healthy competition, so much so that as a young adult she ended up serving on the livestock judging team for Linn Benton Community College (LBCC), where she earned a dual degree with Oregon State University.

After college, Shiann moved east to attend law school at Regent University in Virginia. She passed the bar in three states—including North Carolina—and, there, she practiced criminal and civil law, married her husband, Stuart, and started her family.

However, Oregon seemed to be calling her home. After five years in North Carolina, Shiann and her family made the cross-country move back to Bend, where they now live with their two toddlers. Having young kids, Shiann wanted to follow her heart's passion of working with kids in care while still being a stay-at-home mother. She has a deep commitment to bringing people together to champion our amazing cause and cannot wait to connect with ECCO partners and supporters. For that and many other reasons, we found her to be a perfect fit as our new volunteer coordinator. And in case you're wondering how she's doing back in Oregon, Shiann and her family love it—and don't miss the humidity of the South one bit!



2021 ECCO STAFF:

MELISSA WILLIAMS, DIRECTOR
BRIANNA ROGERS, COMMUNITY
INVESTMENT COORDINATOR
SHIANN SCHMIDT, VOLUNTEER
COORDINATOR

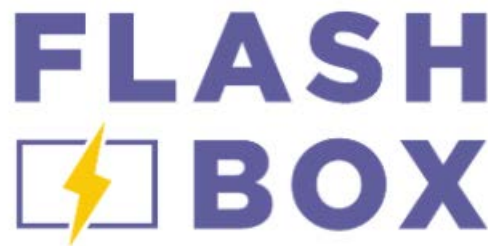
2021 ECCO BOARD:

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JASMINE WILDER, VICE PRESIDENT
ALISSA WATSON, SECRETARY
JOSH CORDELL, TREASURER
STEVE HUGHES
JAMIE GIANNETTINO
ALICIA WHITE

FLASH BOX: A FUN, EASY WAY TO ADVANCE ECCO'S MISSION



Cheerful Flash Box volunteers from Madras!



Every Child Central Oregon (ECCO) asks you to join us in giving a major round of applause to our volunteers from throughout the region, particularly those who have kept our Flash Box program alive and thriving. In addition to a number of individuals who have contributed by putting together and donating Flash Boxes, we'd like to highlight two major Flash Box efforts undertaken by two Central Oregon organizations:

- **Hayden Homes/First Story:** As the “giving arm” of Hayden Homes, First Story offered up a grant to cover the costs of 25 Flash Boxes, a value of approximately \$2,500.
- **Rotary Club of Bend:** Another exciting grant offered to ECCO, the Rotary Club of Bend funded 10 Flash Boxes, a value of approximately \$1,500.

In case you're unaware, the Flash Box program is one of ECCO's most popular ways that community members help our foster families feel appreciated and supported by their community. Flash Boxes are boxes filled with fun activities and gifts of encouragement, everything from games to food to gift cards and more. The idea is to lift up families, providing them with these boxes of inspiration.

Anyone interested in putting together a Flash Box can do so—it's an easy, fun way to get involved with our mission. Visit this link to learn more!

https://everychildoregon.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Flashbox-PDF-2_NEW.pdf



While May is earmarked as National Foster Care Awareness Month, the needs of foster care providers and those they serve continues year round. Gathering numbers on foster care services is a massive undertaking on a national level. Here's a snapshot:

- **437,283:** estimated number of children in foster care nationwide
- **7,435:** average number of children in foster care in Oregon on a daily basis. Of these:
 - An average of 5,314 children were in family foster care. Of those, 47.2 percent (about 2,511 children) were placed with relatives.
 - An average of 764 children were on a trial home visit.
 - An average of 223 children and young adults were served in treatment foster care through Child Welfare Behavioral Rehabilitation Services programs or Oregon Health Authority psychiatric treatment settings.
 - The remaining 1,134 children were in other types of foster care placements, such as developmental disability placements, pre-adoptive placements, and independent living.
- **57.8%:** percent of all children leaving foster care in the state of Oregon, then reunited with their families.
- **23,000+:** number of children who age out of the U.S. foster care system every year.
- **20%:** percent of children who are in foster care *and*, after reaching age 18, become instantly homeless.
- **50%:** the percentage of kids in foster care *and* who age out of the system that will have some form of gainful employment by the age of 24.
- **<3%:** the chance for children who have aged out of foster care to earn a college degree at any point in their life.

Statistics show the gravity of the foster care situation both nationally and locally, one that's being addressed, in part, thanks to Every Child Central Oregon's partners, friends, donors, and, of course, the providers who care for our youth. No doubt, every ounce of compassion and helping hand makes a difference for *all* those experiencing the real-world impacts of foster care.

Sources: National Foster Youth Initiative and Child Welfare Information Gateway: www.childwelfare.gov; and 2019 Child Welfare Data Book (Oregon and Central Oregon numbers): <https://www.oregon.gov/dhs/CHILDREN/CHILD-ABUSE/Documents/2019%20Child%20Welfare%20Data%20Book.pdf>

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