

## Food-Stamp Recipients Receive Annual Increase This Month

*by Bend Weekly News Sources*

Oregon's 221,000 food-stamp households will receive small increases this month in the amount of their benefit and in how much they can earn to qualify. The changes, affecting about 431,000 people, were effective Sunday, Oct. 1.

The federal government, which finances the food-stamp program, revises food-stamp payments annually to reflect changes in food, housing and other costs. Recipients are people who are low-income, elderly or disabled. The average amount of food stamps received by an Oregon household is about \$174.

Households with incomes below 185 percent of the federal poverty level (\$3,084 a month for a family of four) may qualify for benefits, which are based on household income, size and expenses.

For an individual receiving the maximum benefit, the monthly food stamp benefit will increase by \$3, from \$152 to \$155. The individual also can earn up to \$1,062 in monthly gross income, compared with \$1,037 before October 1.

For a family of four receiving the maximum benefit, the food-stamp benefit increases by \$12 from \$506 a month to \$518. Gross monthly family income to qualify for food stamps rises from \$2,097 or less to \$2,167.

The Oregon Department of Human Services manages the federal food-stamp program in Oregon as part of the agency's services to deliver high-quality nutrition to low-income families and to support families moving from welfare to work. Since 1998, Oregon food-stamp benefits have been delivered electronically and recipients are able to obtain funds using a credit card-like Oregon Trail Card.

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