

OSSA Summit

OSSA members had a great time in Salem during the Small Schools Summit and Oregon Educators' Legislative Conference at the Salem Convention Center Feb. 18-19.



(Left:) Brad Yates (Santiam Canyon SD), Reg McShane (Amity SD) and former OSSA Executive Director George Murdock have a laugh during the OSSA Board of Directors meeting before the Small Schools Summit.



(Above:) Ex-Officio Board Member Dr. Hilda Rosselli and immediate past OSSA Board President John Widenoja attend the Board of Directors meeting before the Small Schools Summit.



Oregon State Capital, Salem

(Above Left:) Willamette ESD Superintendent Maureen Caey sits with other OSSA members during the Small Schools Summit in Salem.



Ione Superintendent Bryn Browning and OSSA Executive Secretary Tami Peterson chat.

SMALL TALK

The Road Less Traveled



By
George Murdock
Past Executive Director

The week of Jan. 22 was a tough one for the Nixyaawii girl's basketball team and for many Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) tribal members in Pendleton.

Just a few days earlier, a tragic automobile accident claimed the life of Priscilla Craig, a 15-year-old student at Nixyaawii Community School and a member of the girl's team. Although basketball is part of the lifeblood of Nixyaawii, the girls set aside their hoop routines to mourn the loss of their teammate and friend. When you are 15 years old, it's about living, not dying, and the realities of death are a harsh intruder and certainly an unaccustomed presence.

That Friday night, the Nixyaawii girl's team was scheduled to play Big Sky opponent Ione. Ultimately, they played the game, and despite a week without practice, they managed a 51-32 win.

But the lack of practice and the eventual win really aren't the story. The real story is a sidebar woven into what would otherwise have been just another of a dozen or so league games, and it embodies the true spirit of the high school sports experience -- particularly as it is played out in rural Oregon.

The Ione girl's team read about the death of Priscilla in the local newspaper and decided they wanted to do something in her memory. With the assistance of numerous e-mails, they worked with the coaches and athletic directors from both schools to make sure that what they planned was appropriate within the bounds of tribal customs.

On Friday, Jan. 26, the members of the Ione

see Road on pg. 3

We're all gymnasts ... without the leotards

By Diane Griffin
OSSA Teacher of the Year

The other day the Olympics suddenly popped into my mind -- specifically, gymnastics. I thought back over the years to Nadia Kominech and Olga Corbet!



I searched deep into my gray matter to see why gymnastics had come into my awareness so suddenly. Instantly, I found myself deeply involved in a personal comparison activity - how are gymnastics and teaching alike? What follows is my narrative of this brief brain activity I processed through.

Balance beam: Balancing my home, career, family life, personal needs -- a truly constant performance -- hard to get a "10;" it hurts when you fall.

Floor Routine: Offer variety, stick to a plan, don't leave anything out; complete it all within a time limit, perform each individual part well, don't stumble, bend, stay within the boundaries, don't forget to smile.

Uneven Parallel Bars: Don't lose your grip, timing is everything, don't forget which end is up, be flexible, don't lose track of where you are or what you're doing while you're spinning; hold your mind and body correctly to show good form.

Excitement of the Crowd: Your students, parents, colleagues, administrators, school board and community. You are their star at the present time; sometimes when you err, they accept it- sometimes they don't, they are counting on you to do your best; they need you to be there for them, they see you as the professional; they see you doing things that some of them don't understand or would not be able to do themselves, they expect a lot from you; during tough times they know you'll pull it off well; they admire you.

So onward, all you gymnasts. May the "Thrill of Victory" be yours and the "Agony of Defeat" never find you. Go for the gold!

Just remember -- Thank goodness we aren't expected to teach in spandex leotards.

INSIDE:	
Dealing with a student death	3
Print Shop partnership	4
Joseph students join "Mileage Club"	5
OSSA Summer Institute Changes	7

Road ... continued from pg.1

Lady Cardinals took time out from the game to present each member of the Nixyaawii team with a flower and present Priscilla's sister with a tree and a card signed by each of the players. Their research revealed this was an appropriate tribute within the Native American culture.

Sometimes, in the context of high school athletics, we get a little too serious about the importance of victory and we overlook the residual value of participation and the benefits that come from interacting with students from another school and the benefits of interscholastic competition.

When Prairie City visited Ukiah that same weekend, once the game was over both teams retired to the cafeteria to enjoy a potato bar together before the opponents hit the road for the long drive south through the mountains.

Not all of the staff members from Ione were at the game at Nixyaawii. Some were back in town preparing sack lunches for the Sherman County Huskies who would be visiting their school the following day. They had secured 15 feet of sub sandwiches, 48 bags of chips, and 48 cookies, apples, and oranges as well as two cases of water.

A long-standing tradition in the Big Sky League is that the home team prepares sack lunches and leaves them throughout the players' bus so that the team can leave immediately for the long trip home and still have something to sustain them — not to mention the fact they are taking away a bit of hospitality as a souvenir.

As we read about the "trauma" that schools from Salem, Eugene, and Medford are experiencing this fall and winter as they are forced to travel up and down Interstate 5 as a result of OSAA reclassification, perhaps the real journey they need to take is into the world of reality -- the world that teams from this side of the state experience on a weekly basis.

Our schools don't have Nike contracts and most don't have the benefit of four-lane highways and relatively close opponents. They know what it is like to get home in the wee hours of the morning after driving for three, four, five, or six hours.

What they also have is a clearer understanding that it is more than just a game and that when they leave high school, they will have made friends all over the region.

Sadly, Priscilla Craig won't ever graduate from Nixyaawii, but, in memory, she will still be part of the fabric of life in Eastern Oregon's rural communities.... and in her own way, a part of the tradition that helps our young people grow into caring adults.

This article, written by OSSA Immediate past Executive Director George Murdock, is being reprinted from the East Oregonian, of which Murdock is now the publisher.

REMINDER:

This is the final issue of Small Talk for the 2006-2007 school year. Small Talk will return this fall. If you would like to submit an article and/or photos for Small Talk, or have a story idea, please contact OSSA Executive Secretary Tami Peterson at 541-966-3102, or tami.peterson@umesd.k12.or.us. Have a great summer!

Small Talk

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Foster Grandparents help students with reading

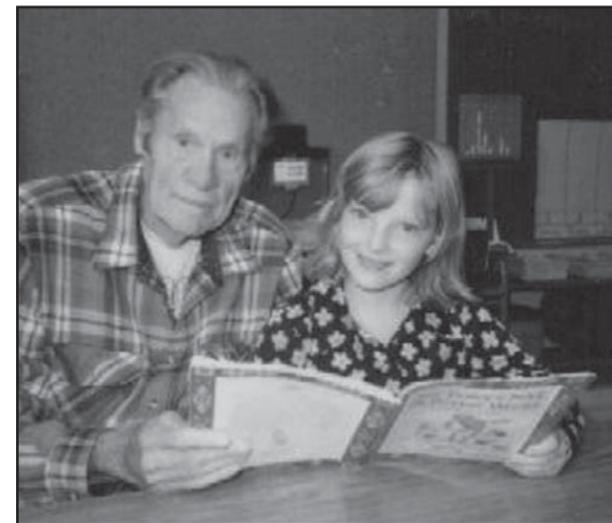
Foster Grandparents are a part of Senior Corps, which is funded by the Corporation for National Service. Generally, the program tries to place interested volunteers with interested schools. Volunteer Foster Grandparents work with school teachers, who assign them to students that need reading assistance. Right now, there are about 85 volunteers and agreements with about 60 schools in Eastern Oregon.

What the Foster Grandparent volunteers do:

- Help kids learn to read – one of the most important skills necessary for their future.
- Work with teachers in developing a plan to help children.
- Assist students on a one-to-one basis at a nearby school.
- Build self esteem and learning skills for school children.

Eligibility for Volunteers:

- 60 years of age (or older)
- Be in good health
- Enjoy kids
- Pass a background check
- Meet income guidelines:
 - » \$1021 or less per month for one person.
 - » \$1375 or less per month for two persons.



Benefits for Volunteers:

- Stipend/Other Benefits: Foster Grandparent volunteers receive a stipend of \$2.65 per hour for each hour of service. The stipend is non-taxable and is not considered income when computing income for other federal/state program eligibilities (i.e., rent assistance, food stamps, energy assistance, etc.). In addition, volunteers receive transportation assistance from the program to cover travel to and from volunteer sites. During the time spent serving as a volunteer, extra insurance is also provided.
- Orientation and on-going training will be provided by the Project Staff and the Volunteer Stations involved.
- The true reward for becoming a volunteer is the satisfaction that comes from helping others.

Contact information:

John Brenne, Project Director
Foster Grandparent Program
1601 SE Court Ave.
Pendleton, OR 97801
Phone: 541-276-4474 (Pendleton)
Toll-free number: 1-800-541-5116
e-mail: fostergrandparen@qwest.net

UPDATE: Summer Institute Changes

Western Oregon University is now handling all registrations for the 2007 combined Oregon Mentor Academy and OSSA Educators' Institute. You can find a link to online registration at: <http://oregonssa.org>.

Western's cost structure is slightly different than that previously advertised by the OSSA. A significant difference in the cost is due to graduate credit. This year, the institute is being credited as a regular course, not as a credit overlay program.

Here are the details:

- \$50 deposit
- \$125 Registration Fee (includes 4 lunches, 1 dinner, and two textbooks)
- \$225 Residential Rate (single room on campus for 4 nights and breakfast every morning) OR
- \$195 Residential Rate (double room on campus for 4 nights and breakfast every morning)
- \$450 Tuition for 3 university credits at \$150 per credit OR
- \$150 Tuition for 3 university credits using a WOU voucher from your district OR
- \$10 Professional Development Units (28 PDUs)

The good news is that many teachers qualify for grant funds to attend the institute. You can check online to see if your school qualifies at: http://www.wou.edu/provost/extprogram/documents/otrm_06-07_school_list.pdf.

OSSA Awards of Excellence, 2006-07

Staff, Student, & Parents – Pacific Crest Community School

Exemplary Alternative Education Program: Pacific Crest Community School has been working for 14 years to create an academically rigorous school that is open to students with a wide variety of backgrounds, interests, and talents. The school has pursued excellence via a non-traditional path. This approach serves many students who were succeeding in their prior schools and many who were not (30% of high school transfers are at risk of dropping out of high school at the time of admission.). Most simply need a different type of learning environment than traditional schools offer. For more information contact Rebecca Lukens at 503-234-2826 or at becky.luken@pcrest.org.

Faculty and Students – Corbett High School

Advanced Placement Program: Corbett's 136 10th, 11th, and 12th graders will take 18 Advanced Placement exams in eight different subjects this spring. This is up from 115 exams in 2005-06, 79 in 2004-05 and 49 in 2003-04. Students currently have access to 11 Advanced Placement classes during their school careers. This is the product of a skilled and caring staff and fearless students. For more information, contact Randy Trani at 503-695-3600, ext. 233, or at rtrani@corbett.k12.or.us.

Faculty – Grant Union High School & Mt. Vernon Middle School

PASS Project – Online Grades: This program involving complete staff commitment/participation was started in the fall of 2005. At this time all staff updates grades on a weekly basis to the school Web page. This has been received very positively by parents & patrons in the Grants School District community. For more information contact Mark Witty at 541-575-1799 or at markwitty@grantesd.k12.or.us.

Elementary School Staff – Fossil School District

Dibels Reading Program: Three years ago, the Fossil Elementary staff wanted to further enhanced student success in reading. As a group they specifically were looking for a method that when they tested their students in reading it would break the results out into the various reading strands so that they could see the strength and weaknesses of each child. By contacting the curriculum director of the North Central ESD, they became one of the first staffs to be trained on a reading method called "Dibels." They have continued their training and by isolating each child's strengths and weaknesses they have had remarkable success to the point that our reading scores have climbed significantly, leading to the elementary school receiving its exceptional rating on the state report card. For more information contact Mike Hughes at 541-763-4303 or at mhughes@fossil.k12.or.us.

Hail & Farewell ... to George Murdock

The staff at the Umatilla-Morrow ESD said goodbye to Superintendent George Murdock during a party that celebrated his accomplishments at the ESD and in education, as well as wished him luck as the new publisher/editor of the East Oregonian newspaper in Pendleton. Staff donations paid for the entire party, including the beverages!



(Above:) ESD staff member and artist Caryn Appler drew this caricature of George Murdock, pulling in all the significant things in George's life.

(Below:) John Day Superintendent Newell Cleaver gives a "roast" of George.



(Above:) George wears a Washington State University dunce cap and holds an actual roast given to him by Umatilla Superintendent Brian Say during Brian's "roast."

(Below:) Students in the Athena-Weston Scottish Pipes & Drums Band play at the start of the party, honoring George's Scottish heritage.



Moving On:

Ione Community School deals with death of student

The students at Ione Community School rallied together when a female basketball player at Nixyaawii Community School in Pendleton died in January. But the students in Ione never realized they'd have to rally back together when one of their own suddenly passed away in March.

Freshman Stormy Kendrick, 15, died from a heart attack while riding in a car with his mother on March 9. The boy with the big smile was an athlete, volunteered with his church and community, and was really beginning to enjoy school. His death hit his school of just 143 students and its close-knit community like a brick.



Bryn Browning
grief."

Ione Superintendent Bryn Browning was devastated, but knew she had to be the strong one for her students, some of whom had never personally known someone who had ever died.

"I didn't do a very good job of being strong the first 30 minutes after I found out about Stormy," Browning said. "I took the five minutes I needed to just sit in my office with the door shut and cried. Then I had to be strong."

Browning had the difficult task of addressing her staff, and then her students, that following Monday morning. Stormy had died on a Friday, when Ione students don't have classes.

"(His death) became very real when I had to tell everyone Monday morning," Browning recalled. "It was overwhelming to see everyone going through their

Browning also contacted the Umatilla-Morrow ESD's Crisis Flight Team, which responds to school tragedies, such as a student death.

"The ESD took a huge weight off my shoulders by playing that key role with the crisis counseling," Browning said. "I do really well with lists of things to do, and the crisis counselor gave me a list to keep me busy and keep my mind off what I was really going through."

Browning offered to hold Stormy's funeral in one of his favorite places – the school gymnasium. But planning a funeral while going through the grieving process is no easy task. However, Ione students immediately put themselves to work to help out in any way possible.

The students washed windows, swept floors, hung posters, set up chairs and took as much weight off Browning's shoulders as possible. But when Browning went through a test-run of a slideshow of photos of Stormy, students dropped everything and sat down in the gym to watch and cry.

"Those kids needed to cry, needed to talk with each other to get through this," Browning said. "We all went through it together – the whole community."

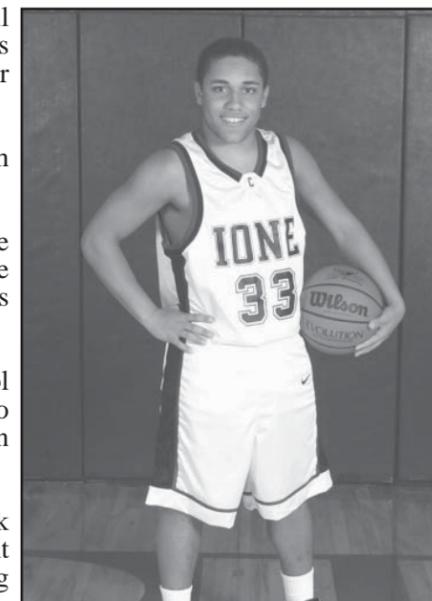
Just a week after the March 15 funeral, students went on Spring Break, "so that was good timing after all of this," Browning said. The first week back to school after the break brought an "artist in residence" to the school to teach the students various dances and songs.

"That was the first time the kids were back in the gym since the funeral," Browning said. "But because they were dancing and having so much fun, they kept their minds off of Stormy."

Browning said students have had no problems finding ways to stay busy, to keep their minds off their grief. Students immerse themselves in sports, speech, FFA and other activities. But that's not to say moving on is easy.

"You have your days that are diamonds, and you have your days that are rocks," Browning said. "But life does go on, and our kids are really resilient. But we'll always remember Stormy. We'll keep moving on and just hope that nothing like this ever happens again.

"We just have to give the kids a lot more hugs."



Stormy Kendrick

Umatilla-Morrow ESD enters into print shop partnership with Union-Baker ESD

Intermountain Printing and Graphics – the Umatilla-Morrow Education Service District’s (UMESD) print shop – has entered into a partnership with the Union-Baker ESD, which will allow it to now offer printing services to every school district in Eastern Oregon.

The partnership, which began April 1, also will allow the facility to expand its entrepreneurial end of the business, said UMESD Chief Operating Officer Michael Lasher. The print shop already provides printing services to numerous public agencies, including city and county governments in Eastern Oregon.



“We’d really like to expand our business here,” Lasher said. “This partnership is going to create some capacity for other school districts and public agencies to use us.”

The print shop’s many presses, printers, copiers, collators and other machines have the ability to create specialty letterhead and envelopes, 11x17-inch posters, calendars, carbonless forms, newsletters, brochures, pamphlets and more.

Perhaps the biggest test of this new partnership started April 2, when the print shop took on the hefty task of printing 154,000 Oregon State Assessment tests for the Oregon Department of Education. These paper/pencil versions of testing booklets and answer sheets will replace the online versions the state usually has students use after the online vendor was shut down

several months ago.

Only two other print shops in the state – one at the Willamette ESD in Salem and one at the Portland Public School District – will print these tests for schools around the state. The ODE asked all ESDs in the state if they would like to take on the job, and the UMESD jumped at the chance. The tests printed at the UMESD print shop on Airport Road will be shipped today to districts from Hood River eastward to the Oregon-Idaho border, including southeastern Oregon.

“We’re making money on this deal,” Lasher said. “We’re able to help out the school districts by printing these tests and also make some money on the side.”

Print shop staff have worked for nearly the past month to complete the printing job, putting in many overtime and weekend hours. For the past few days, other UMESD staff and some college students –who work part-time for the UMESD during the summers – helped to box up the right tests with the right answer sheets to go to the right schools.

The print shop went through eight pallets of 11x17-inch paper – that’s 320 cases – to print the tests.

While print shop staff worked on printing the tests, they also had to continue to work on other print jobs ordered by the UMESD, other school districts and public agencies.

“They’ve done a great job,” Lasher said.



For more information: http://www.umesd.k12.or.us/print_home

Joseph Elementary students join ‘Mileage Club’



Joseph Elementary Special Ed Para Professional Tanya Collier stamps the mileage cards of two students after they completed another lap around the school.

When Joseph Elementary School decided to make fitness one of the Eastern Oregon school’s goals this year, teachers never realized just how much the kids would get into it.

Special Education Para Professional Tanya Collier, along with other teachers, started the “Mileage Club” for elementary students. The non-competitive program encourages students to walk around the elementary school during recess to rack up the miles and stay healthy.

For every lap, students receive a stamp on their mileage card. A full mileage card means five miles have been accomplished – and a prize. In just the first week of the program earlier this year, the students collectively walked 20 miles around the school. After 6 weeks, they accomplished 1,210 miles.

Not only does the Mileage Club promote fitness and a healthy lifestyle, but it also helps with playground discipline, Collier said.

“They are so busy walking at recess, they can’t get into trouble,” Collier said. “And a lot of the kids run instead of walk, so it wipes them out and the teachers love it when they get back to class.”

Some students have taken the program a step further than walking. Some now jump rope. For every five minutes of jump roping, students receive a stamp on their mileage card.

Joseph Elementary isn’t the only school in the district with a horn to toot. Joseph High School this year began doing Senior Projects, and students are far exceeding staff expectations.

Each senior is required to complete a senior project that has something to do with what the student would possibly like to do as a career later in life. For example, for one project a student had the opportunity to witness a Caesarian-Section birth and hernia surgeries. The project includes portions of community service and career awareness, said teacher Kendall Hayes. In addition, students also learn about how to fill out their college scholarship and admission applications, create resumes and request reference letters.

“It’s a nice addition to the curriculum,” Hayes said. “Every step is a teachable moment.”

“We were able to bring all the career education in together instead of just pieces of it in different classes,” added Joseph Superintendent Rhonda Shirley.

Each of the 28 seniors this year had to give a presentation to fellow students and staff at the end of their projects to pass the program and graduate.

“The expectations were very high,” Hayes said. “This wasn’t just something they could throw together overnight.”

Shirley said they rose to those expectations. Students dressed professionally for their presentations and talked about what they had learned throughout the process of putting together their projects – a 7-month-long task.

“It was great to see what they had learned throughout their process,” Hayes said. “Most of them thought the project was very worthwhile, so that was great to hear.”

After watching the seniors take on their projects, some of this year’s juniors are already starting to think about their own senior projects. For example, junior Megan Yost wants to start a children’s rodeo for special needs kids, modeled off the Umatilla-Morrow ESD’s Children’s Rodeo at the Pendleton Round-Up.

Shirley said Hayes and teacher Marylou Guentert developed the curriculum for the program.



Two Joseph Elementary Mileage Club students stay fit at recess by making laps around the small Eastern Oregon school.