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# THE GROWLER

Odessa High School, Odessa, Missouri

## OMS students raise money for a therapy dog in need



**Dodger, OMS therapy dog, enjoys the attention on Dodger Day. His friends Chase Sullivan, seventh-grader, Brandon Greer, eighth-grader, and Abigail White, sixth-grader, show their support by helping raise funds for his surgery**

By Gracie Buxton

OMS students and staff members pulled together to help one of their own in a time of need. This staff member, who helps countless students daily, enjoys treats and wears a fur coat. Everyone calls him Dodger, and he is the OMS therapy dog.

Students and staff members came to school decked out in boots and cowboy hats on February 1 to celebrate Dodger Day. The fundraiser was created to raise money for Dodger, who had to have an expensive surgery and racked up more than \$1000 in veterinarian bills.

Dodger's intestines stopped moving food through, and after x-rays and a barium study were inconclusive, he had exploratory surgery. He is doing well but will be on a restricted diet from now on.

Kendra Malizzi, principal, decided to hold the fundraiser to help Dodger because he helps so many students. Participants paid \$1 to support Dodger and wear western wear to school. Approximately \$350 was raised.

"I love that our students are

able to have a connection with Dodger and are excited to see him around the building," Malizzi said. "He even gets his picture taken for the yearbook."

Dodger attends school and travels to classes with Bell, who is an OMS paraprofessional. He is a four-year-old Australian cattle dog, a breed developed to herd cattle over long distances. However, at OMS, Dodger helps in many ways.

"His role changes as needed," Bell said, "from making kids smile when they come in in the morning, to picking up dropped pencils, to helping kids feel better when they are a little sad."

He greets students in the morning and visits with students in the hallways. If a student has a rough start to the day, he or she can begin the day visiting Dodger. Also, if a student gets frustrated during the day, he or she can take a break and visit Dodger. Staff members even visit Dodger.

"I enjoy seeing the students' and staff members' faces light up when they see him," Bell said.

Dodger also listens to a group of sixth-graders read

aloud each day. This helps students gain confidence because he is non-judgmental.

"He doesn't care whether they read well or not," Bell said. "He just wants to be around them."

Dodger prepared for his job at OMS by receiving special training. He received six weeks of basic obedience training at Tipton Correctional Center. Dodger has taken and passed advanced obedience classes and the Canine Good Citizen test through the American Kennel Club with Tracy Bell, his owner and handler. Together they became certified through Therapy Dogs International, a certifying body that requires the dogs to take a performance test.

Students help care for Dodger and feed and water him in the mornings, and he used to receive lots of treats during the day as well. In fact, one of Dodger's favorite visitors is Chae Cogdill, OMS custodian. Dodger knows her as the "treat lady." Dodger has treats stashed all over the school, including the office, teachers' rooms, and in his backpack. However, Bell will now be introducing treats that are easier on his stomach. He will also be getting vegetables as treats.

"His diet is more limited, and he's not happy," Bell said.

Bell keeps what he needs in the backpack along with his favorite toy, a tennis ball. Dodger's favorite part of the day is after school when he can be found playing fetch with the students.

Bell said she and Dodger love working at OMS, and that it is different from any other school where she has worked. She said the staff is caring and sends each other cards,

See **Dodger**, page 3

## OHS meteorology class visits local news station



**Students in the OHS meteorology class listen to Lindsey Anderson, meteorologist at KSHB-TV 41, as they toured the weather station**

By Dakotah Stubblefield

The weather station was filled with laughter as a student's head appeared to be floating in mid-air on the television screen. Students enjoyed interacting with the green screen that meteorologists stand in front of to appear alongside the weather map for a broadcast. Odessa High School's meteorology class enjoyed the opportunity to learn outside of the classroom.

Sixteen members of the class visited KSHB-TV, Kansas City's 41 Action News station, on February 13 where they toured the weather station. Lindsey Anderson, morning news certified meteorologist, was their hostess for the day.

"I really enjoyed Lindsey Anderson showing us what it was like behind the scenes," Madi Ford, senior, said. "She looks literally the same as she does on TV."

Anderson showed the students the control room where the directors write scripts and monitor the show. Next, they toured the audio room where podcasts are done, and then the students viewed the Kansas City Live studio, where

they were able to sit and watch a live show. Finally, students went on to see the main studio where the news is broadcast.

The students learned how the weather map is used by the news anchors in the studio. They also learned about the different computer models that are used to calculate storms. Anderson talked about how the anchors work as a team to predict the weather, which is always changing.

After the tour of the studio, students had lunch at the Cheesecake Factory and visited the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art. A painting in the hallway resembling a tornado grabbed the students' attention and was a favorite.

Allan Twilligear, meteorology teacher, arranged the trip, and Angie Sallee, OHS librarian, was the chaperone.

"What a great opportunity to see behind the scenes at KSHB," Sallee said. "Lindsey Anderson was a terrific host giving students insight into both weather forecasting and television broadcasting. The chance to sit in the audience for KC Live was a fun experience, too."

# Jeremy Helton helps at-risk students achieve success

By Kyra Morris

Jeremy Helton, OHS at-risk teacher, is new to OHS but not new to teaching. He has taught and coached for sixteen years in several capacities. Currently, he teaches social studies and communication arts to students who have fallen behind or who are at-risk of not graduating.

Brad Briscoe, OHS principal, said Helton has a passion for teaching and works hard to build relationships with the students he serves.

“His ability to work with at-risk populations makes him an ideal candidate for his position,” Briscoe said. “He is always willing to help out our school with his team-oriented approach, making him a great fit at OHS.”

Helton credits his past high school football coaches for influencing his career choice. Helton said they made a positive impact on him.

“I had really good high school coaches that I was close with who inspired me to teach and coach.

“I’ve wanted to be a teacher as long as I remember,” Helton said. “There’s nothing else I would rather do. It’s been a rewarding career.”

Helton grew up and went to high school in Plattsburg. He played football, and participated in student council, FFA and was on the yearbook staff. During high school, he worked in the kitchen at a local restaurant and helped local farmers.

After graduation, he attended the University of Central Missouri for four years and graduated in 1998. Helton said

he loved college and even enjoyed doing research and writing papers.

Helton previously taught in Richmond, Belton and Kearney before coming to Odessa. In addition to teaching core classes, Helton has taught P.E. and coached football, basketball, baseball and wrestling over the years. Currently he is the defensive coordinator for Odessa’s football team.

Helton said his favorite parts of coaching are the relationships that are built within the teams, the competitive aspects of the games and the constant challenges from week to week and season to season.

Helton said he is pleased with his choice to teach in a town that is similar in size to the one he grew up in. He said Odessa and Plattsburgh have a similar small-town environment.

“I have had a great experience here so far,” Helton said.

In Helton’s free time, he enjoys traveling. He likes to take short trips around Missouri and longer trips when he can. Recently he went to Colorado



**Jeremy Helton, OHS At-Risk teacher, helps students who have fallen behind or who are at-risk of not graduating. Helton credits his past high school football coaches for influencing his career choices.**

because he loves the mountains. Helton would like to travel to Europe, Africa and South America someday as well.

Helton’s also enjoys listen-

ing to live music, especially blues, and he enjoys reading history books. He has two pets, an outdoor cat and a fire ball python snake, named Voltaire.

## Scholar Bowl season delayed because of inclement weather

canceled January 30 when the Holden quad was scheduled and on February 6 for the Excelsior Springs quad. The season began over a month late.

“It is like we have a dark cloud hanging over us this year,” Kris Poisal, OHS Scholar Bowl coach, said. “It is so hard to reschedule the events because all schools in the conference have to agree to play on the same date at the same time due to question security. That can be limiting.”

“Our game format is different this year, so we have been excited to try out the new question sets,” Poisal said. “It is fun to see how difficult the questions are.”

Teachers, parents and community volunteers keep score, time and moderate the events which have some similarities to Jeopardy! Questions come

from multiple disciplines and involve quick response answers, time limits and buzzer systems.

The teams play two halves with 13 toss-up questions each, and all questions answered correctly are followed by three bonus questions. All questions are worth 10 points.

“Bonus questions with every toss-up made it more of a one-sided game,” Burks said. “If you get a bonus that is incredibly easy, you can get three easy points. So, games didn’t seem as close as they did with last year’s format.”

Typically the games start at 5 p.m. Three games follow one after the other and usually end by 8 p.m. The games are structured and talking is not allowed, so it is different than a sporting event. No electronic devices can be used in the

room either to ensure question security.

Scholar Bowl is a MSHSAA certified activity that requires good grades, attendance and citizenship. In addition to the quads, Scholar Bowl teams compete in conference, district and state tournaments. Conference was March 13 at Excelsior Springs and districts will be Saturday at Oak Grove.

During the first home quad held on February 21, the varsity team defeated Oak Grove but fell to Pleasant Hill and Excelsior Springs. Alex Wood, junior, was Odessa’s high scorer with 13 questions answered. Payson Burks, junior, answered ten, and Reese Wood, junior captain, answered eight.

The JV team, made up of all new members, gained game experience but dropped its

three matches. Jordan Jackson, sophomore captain, lead the team with 11 questions answered. Makenzie Harget answered two.

“We have pizza before our competitions to power our brains,” Poisal said. “It is fun to enjoy a meal together before we compete. Otherwise, when we travel, we can get home pretty late. I don’t want the players to lose concentration because they are hungry.”



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By Jillian Taylor

OHS Scholar Bowl season was scheduled to begin January 16 with a home quad; however, the event was delayed due to inclement weather. This seemed to set the tone for the season: the home event was rescheduled to January 23 and canceled again; school was

# McQuerry students celebrate 100 days of school



Adley McCarthy, Koleman Ogan, Liam Clemons, and Brody Slusher, kindergarteners, show off t-shirts they made at home to celebrate the 100th day of school.

By Olivia Stucker

Students at McQuerry elementary sported t-shirts on February 5 with 100 monster eyes, 100 random items, 100 nice notes, 100 buttons, and many other items totaling 100 to celebrate the 100th day of school. Students designed and created the t-shirts and par-

ticipated in numerous other activities centered around the number 100.

Students made the t-shirts at home to wear on the 100th day of school. Classes also participated in a variety of stations at school that revolved around the number 100. Sta-

tions included games and activities including creating hats, building towers with 100 plastic cups and making necklaces out of 100 Fruit Loops to name a few.

The t-shirt designs were a favorite for students and teachers. Laura Kelley, first grade teacher, said the students had

creative ideas for their shirts. Declan Burrus, first-grader, created a shirt with 100 eyes on a monster.

"I liked gluing all the eyeballs on my shirt," Declan said.

Alex Mason, first-grader, made a shirt with 100 random objects, and Kinsley Johns, first-grader, designed a 100-days-down shirt with check marks.

"I was going to put Nike swooshes, but it didn't work out, so I put the check marks," Kinsley said.

Several students decorated shirts with 100 buttons: Lillie and Cora Gassen, Cayden Swan, Jude Woods, Sophia Barker, Belle Scafe and Faith Mitchell, first-graders.

"There were so many good ideas, that I can't choose a favorite," Kelley said.

Christie Robinette, McQuerry Elementary secretary, had a favorite design. Robinette said Phoebe Shelden from

Jenny Hand's kindergarten class wrote 100 nice sayings on sticky notes and put them on her shirt. Sayings included, "you are smart," "you are nice" and "you are pretty."

"She went around taking them off and giving them to kids in the hallways," Robinette said.

All classes also participated in a laundry soap collection to donate to the Odessa Community Service Center. Students donated 56 containers of laundry soap.

The laundry soap was collected and placed outside the classrooms for pickup by the first-graders in Kelley's class. They took the laundry soap to the office to be collected and delivered by Sarah Williams, community member. Williams thought of the laundry soap donation activity when her child was in Kelley's class and has been helping with the collection ever since.

## Therapy dog to compete in first agility competition

Dodger from 1 baskets, candy or even money, if there is a need.

Bell adopted Dodger, adding him to her menagerie of three dogs, four inside cats, three barn cats, two horses, a goldfish, a goat and a rooster. She adopted him through the "Puppies for Parole" program of the Missouri Department of Corrections.

"It is a great program, and they produce dogs that are

more prepared to go to a home environment than shelter dogs," Bell said.

When at home, Bell said Dodger enjoys snuggling with her, playing with her other dogs and training for an agility competition. He has been training for almost a year and will compete in his first event in two months.

"It's a lot of fun and gives him some mental stimulation outside of school," Bell said.



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## New student teachers gain valuable experience at OHS



**Monika McQueen and Cory Smith, OHS student teachers, are working with veteran teachers and learning the teaching trade.**

By Lilah Bane

OHS student teachers, Monika McQueen and Cory Smith, are finishing their college and state requirements this semester and are preparing to graduate and seek employment.

McQueen is working with Crisa Seals, OHS Special Education teacher, and Smith is working with Kris Poisal, OHS Communication Arts/Journalism teacher.

Seals has taught for more than eight years. She taught the winter semester in 2011 at the Independence School District. Then she taught four years in the Blue Springs School District as a sixth grade Special Education teacher before coming to the Odessa School District in 2015. He worked at the Odessa Middle School as the sixth grade Special Education teacher for two years and then joined the OHS staff in 2017 as the Special Education teacher for the Communication Arts Department.

Poisal has taught freshmen English and various journalism classes at OHS for the past 27 years.

McQueen, who graduated from Tri-City Christian in Independence, is a nontraditional student who decided to be a stay-at-home mom before pursuing a teaching degree. Her undergrad degree was in interior design, but she said she was drawn to teaching later in life.

“I believe that college is wasted on the youth because you don’t always know what you want to do when you are young,” McQueen said. “I encourage kids to travel, take a year to think and don’t commit. It is easy to jump into college because you think you are supposed to.”

McQueen became interested in education when she started substitute teaching to get on the same schedule as her children. McQueen often substituted in a Special Education classroom because they requested her, and that is when she decided she wanted to be a Special Education teacher.

“I fell in love with the kids while substitute teaching. I felt like there was a satisfaction in being able to teach them so much more,” McQueen said.

After substitute teaching, McQueen worked as a SPED para in Lexington.

McQueen is currently enrolled at Grand Canyon University, a private university through Phoenix, Arizona, and she is majoring in Special Education.

McQueen’s previous experience was with middle school students, so the high school environment is new to her.

She said she loves her students and believes they all are capable of learning at a high level. McQueen said being a Special Education teacher is

her dream job, and she doesn’t care what age she teaches as long as she’s working with kids.

“I get to go in and out of so many classes,” McQueen said, “so I get to see all these different teachers and their styles.”

McQueen and her husband, Tim, adopted four children. They have three daughters: Kenzi, 13; Daniella, 13; and Samantha, 10, and a son, Devin, 13. The family currently lives in Lexington.

Cory Smith, 2014 OHS graduate, is working with the College Preparatory Language Arts I classes. His major is English education with certification to teach grades nine through twelve. He is also planning to become certified to teach grades six through twelve in the future. Smith would have to take and pass an additional test to expand his certification.

“The best part of student teaching is the group of kids that I am teaching,” Smith said. “I love being able to teach back home at my high school

and hometown. I see some familiar faces and last names in each of my classes, and I have loved my student teaching experience so far.”

When Smith graduated from OHS, he first attended the University of Missouri in Columbia to become a sports journalist. He had a work-study position at the *Columbia Missourian* newspaper and worked as a sports agent where he updated sports standings.

Smith was also a Community Advisor while living on campus at MU. Smith pursued a journalism degree for a year and a half before changing his major and transferring to the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg. The transfer allowed him to live at home and commute.

He decided to become an English teacher and credited one of his high school English teachers for inspiring him. Mike Shields, retired OHS English teacher, taught Smith’s English Honors III and Dual Credit English/Composition

I classes. Smith said Shields’ classes were difficult but inspired him to continue writing.

Smith believed changing his major from journalism to English education would allow him to reach more people in a positive manner.

“I enjoy helping other people,” Smith said. “I felt like becoming an English teacher would be more beneficial to society. So far, that change has been one of the best decisions of my life.”

Smith would love to teach in his hometown of Odessa or a school of a similar size within driving distance. He is anxious to begin teaching and have his own classroom, and he is open to any English classes and grade levels.

“I have found that being proactive about known in-class issues helps both me and the students with effective management,” Smith said. “I think the students now feel more comfortable with me as their teacher, which has also positively contributed to my classroom management strategies.”

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