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THE GROWLER

Odessa High School, Odessa, Missouri

Students organize day of reflection on violence and suicide

By Alex Wood, Jenna Roncelli & Victoria Miller

Mission Possible sounds like a movie title, but the scenes were actually played out in hallways, classrooms and the lunchroom at OHS as a student-led initiative took place. This powerful and personal event was about making everyone realize they have a place in the world and can make a positive difference for others.

OHS celebrated this event, Mission Possible, on March 29 promoting school safety and suicide awareness/prevention. The activities included hourly “missions” and culminated in an all-school assembly where a student spoke out about her walk with suicidal thoughts, and students and teachers were awarded for making a difference every day.

A student-led committee organized the day after obtaining permission from Buffie McConville, OHS principal. Committee members Abby Riess, junior, Kennedy Burnell and Hannah Isley, seniors, approached McConville about wanting to do something in response to recent school shootings and to support the school’s SOS, suicide prevention outreach program, which was held for students on March 22.

The students approached McConville individually, not knowing the others had spoken to her. They wanted to do something for the “Walk Out” or “Walk Up Not Out” movement, according to McConville, but nothing materialized. They wanted to make a difference, but do it the right way, which McConville said she appreciated. McConville was able to connect the students,



MISSION POSSIBLE | Buffie McConville, OHS principal, introduces Mission Possible committee members during the all-school assembly, from left, Hannah Isley, senior, Abagale Riess, junior, and Kennedy Burnell, senior.

who formed the committee and started making plans.

“It is my job to teach students that they matter, and they can make a difference,” McConville said. “It was a day to make sure every single student felt important, heard and most of all, loved. The planning committee worked hard to make this a meaningful day at OHS.”

Students and staff were encouraged to wear orange, representing school safety and/or yellow, representing suicide awareness and prevention. According to McConville, the day was free from any political agenda, and was about making everyone at OHS feel included.

“As a whole, OHS does a really good job of trying to include everyone,” Isley said. “However, today, they took it a step further. The girls and I are pleased with the participation we saw

throughout the day.”

Hourly “missions” were announced as challenges for students and staff: introduce yourself to someone new and take a selfie; text an adult or family member who is important to you and tell them you appreciate them; find someone new to sit by at lunch; tell your teacher something you enjoy about them or their class; and compliment someone for a gift or talent.

Riess, Burnell and Isley attended a StuCo meeting and shared their vision, then StuCo decided to support the day by providing manpower for whatever the committee members needed. StuCo worked alongside the committee members to design flyers, social media posts and a geofilter on Snapchat to document acts of kindness. Selfies were posted on Twit-

ter, Instagram and Snapchat throughout the day with the hashtag, #OHSTogether.

“We were thrilled to support this student-led initiative,” Angie Sallee, OHS StuCo sponsor, said. “That day truly demonstrated a spirit of unity and cooperation.”

StuCo volunteers helped serve as greeters, distributed orange silicone bracelets and candy, created sticky note sayings to post in the restrooms and for the Take What You Need board, manned the Kindness Notes table and Selfie Station, and served as deejays both before school and during lunch. Lunch tables were moved into a different configuration to encourage students to mingle and talk to someone new. Riess, Burnell and Isley ran the “What do you like about you?” board as well as helping with the other

endeavors throughout the day.

At the beginning of Bulldog Block, the assembly began with McConville leading the student body in a moment of silence for those who lost their lives to school violence and suicide. Next, the committee members spoke regarding their personal experiences.

Burnell spoke about how others made such a powerful impact on her life and her decisions when she had previously contemplated suicide.

“I changed my mind because of small acts like the ones you all did today,” Burnell said. The people who asked me if I was okay and listened when I said, ‘no, I’m not.’”

Awards were given to students and teachers who were recognized for making a difference.

“I appreciate the teachers who go out of their way to make all of their students feel wanted and loved,” Riess said. “It is hard to pick just one teacher to acknowledge, but I knew that I had chosen Mrs. Cole for the right reason when she texted me through Remind101 the morning of Mission Possible with encouraging words.”

Hunter Todd, OHS junior, recognized Harry Hamblin, choir teacher, as making a difference for him.

“I am so grateful for Hunter’s kindness and heartfelt words,” Hamblin said. “I don’t do this job to get plaudits or honors; I do this to make a positive difference in the lives of my students. I had so many teachers who made a difference for me, and I want to help in that same way.”

Daniel Malone, OHS PE
See OHS, page 2



WE MATTER TOGETHER | Alexa Gust and Laura Empson, seniors, and Jayci Cochran, junior, enjoy the Selfie Station during OHS Mission Possible.

McCONVILLE ADDRESSES STUDENTS AT ASSEMBLY

OHS from page 1
teacher, recognized Trace Kelley, OHS freshman, for being kind and always including everyone when playing games. Malone said PE is an area where some people are competitive, but Kelley fosters a sense of belonging and wants everyone to get along and have fun together.

“Class is more fun when everyone joins the game,” Kelley said.

Then, McConville concluded the assembly by reading a children’s book to the group titled *You’re Here for a Reason* by Nancy Tillman, New York Times best selling author.

The book’s message was about

everyone having a purpose. Tillman’s book stated, “...a piece of the world that is precious and dear would surely be missing if you weren’t here. If not for your smile and your laugh and your heart, this place we call home would be minus a part.”

The entire student body and staff participated in an all-school breakdown at center-court before being dismissed.

“This day, without a doubt, will forever be my favorite,” McConville said. “The kindness I witnessed, the smiles I shared, the hugs and tears...these kids are so special, and the teachers so committed.”

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OHS DECA qualifies record number of students for international competition



OHS DECA has a record number of International Career Development Conference qualifiers. Additionally, Cooper Stiles is running for National DECA office. Of the 15 students attending state, 10 students placed and will attend ICDC. Attendees were (front row) Cooper Stiles, Jessica Callahan, Camryn Ramsey, McKenzie Gawf, Maddie Murry, McKenzie Wixon and Olivia Dale; (back row) Logan Parks, Matthew Younce, Aubrey Beard, Kaydon Iman, Alexis Couch, Brylee Duncan, Alexis Riefel and Alyson Tuckwiller.

By Shayne Lewis

OHS DECA qualified a record number of members for international competition and have a candidate for a national DECA office, Cooper Stiles, senior, who will be launching his campaign at the International Career Development Conference April 20-25 in Atlanta, Georgia.

The members qualified for internationals at the state competition March 11-13 at Crown Center in Kansas City, qualifying 10 of the 15 students for ICDC. This record number of qualifiers is a success, but also a challenge.

“It is a huge and fairly expensive undertaking,” Jessica Wade, OHS DECA adviser and Marketing teacher, said. “In order to get all 10 qualifiers to ICDC, plus fund the officer campaign, we need to raise \$14,000 in the next four weeks. Although we have banked some of that money throughout the year, we still need to raise a substantial amount.”

Cooper Stiles, senior, was a finalist in Human Resources Management at state and will be Missouri DECA’s candidate for Central Region Vice President, a national DECA office. He also received the Lead a Legacy Missouri DECA schol-

arship out of approximately 60 scholarship applicants.

“The CRVP campaign will be a ton of work and a lot of fun,” Wade said. “Cooper is running against several students from other states for the opportunity to secure one of the top five student-leadership offices in the nation.”

State results are as follows: Aubrey Beard and Kaydon Iman placed first in Business Services Operations Research. Alexis Couch and Camryn Ramsey placed third in Hospitality and Tourism Operations Research. Matthew Younce and Logan Parks placed fourth in Sports and Entertainment Operations Research. Brylee Duncan and Maddie Murry placed sixth in Marketing Management Team Decision Making and will help manage Stiles’ CRVP campaign. Jessica Callahan was a finalist in Buying and Merchandising Operations Research and will also help manage Stiles’ campaign.

For ICDC, students must complete a research project and a 30 page paper with a 10-15 minute professional presentation to the judges. Stiles is also practicing his presentation in OHS classrooms.

“The preparation is a lot of work and a lot of fun,” Stiles

said. “I don’t really know what to expect when I get there, but I am sure it will be a wild ride. With the campaign team I have and my experiences as a state officer, I believe I have a good chance at winning the position.”

One of the ways the DECA members are raising funds for ICDC is through their T-shirt business. They make custom shirts and can make shirts for teams, clubs, families, etc. They are also holding a car wash, holding a fundraiser at the Odessa Creamery, running concession stands and accepting donations.

They held Black Box night on March 22, where they received part of the profit and displayed their projects and spoke about their experiences.

“If anyone would like to place an order, please contact me,” Wade said. “Thank you to everyone who has already placed orders. I can be contacted by my email, jr Wade@odessar7.net.”

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First time donors make a big difference in OHS blood drive

By Sydney Futrell

OHS Student Council hosted its annual blood drive from 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on March 14 in the OHS wood gym. They registered 176 donors including students, staff and community members and collected 155 units of blood. OHS saw a large number of first-time donors.

"Ninety-three first-time donors accounted for over half of the donors that day," Angie Sallee, OHS StuCo sponsor said.

Community Blood Center needs to collect approximately 600 units of blood daily to keep up with the number of people needing a blood transfusion in

the Kansas City region. They rely on blood donors and encourage people to donate blood and save lives. Blood drives, like the one held at OHS, account for more than 70% of the pints needed.

Donors can give blood every 56 days, but must weigh a minimum of 110 pounds, be in good health and be age 16; however, donors who are under 18 need to have parental permission.

"Our appreciation goes out to all who donated and who tried to donate blood," Angie Sallee, OHS StuCo sponsor, said. "You helped save multiple lives."

Glow fundraiser hosted at OMS already in the works for next year



IT'S GLOW TIME | Anthony DeGraffenried, seventh-grader, shows off his glow sticks while participating in the Glow Run fundraiser sponsored by OMS STEP. Funds raised will be used to purchase Chromebooks for classrooms.

By Holley Salisbury

OMS STEP held a Glow Run from 6 to 7 p.m. on March 1 to raise money for technology. Candice Bradley, OMS Special Education teacher, organized the event.

The fundraiser, which cost \$15 per person, brought in over \$800 which will be used to add to the number of classroom

Chromebooks.

"We would like to have a Chrome Cart with 30 Chromebooks for each classroom," Bradley said.

Participants entered the dark school and were given glow-in-the-dark glow sticks and the option to purchase glow-in-the-dark T-shirts. Music played while they walked/ran

Juniors upset Seniors in Prom Fundraiser at OHS

By Sydney Futrell

OHS PowderBuff games were held at 6:30 p.m. on March 13 in the wood gym where the junior boys took on the senior boys in a volleyball challenge.

The fundraiser, sponsored by the Odessa Optimist Club, charged participants \$20, and they received a T-shirt to wear during the games. The entry fee was \$3, and the class also raised money from concessions. The \$775 raised will help pay for Prom. Heather Meler, OHS science teacher and head junior class sponsor, organized the event.

Meler said she decided the girls shouldn't have all the excitement. The junior and senior girls play in an annual Powder-Puff flag football game, so she decided the boys should have an opportunity to participate in a similar event.

"I wanted to compete against the junior boys," Cale Neville, senior, said. "I knew a little bit about volleyball because my sister played."

Practices were held prior to the event, and while experi-

ence was desired, it was not required. Attendance at practices was encouraged, but it was not required either. There were enough participants to field two junior teams and two senior teams.

"In practice, we learned how to spike and set a ball," Neville said. "It was super fun. We messed around and played dodgeball too."

The two junior teams played each other, and the two senior teams played each other with all games ending within a couple of points. Then the junior class took on the senior class for the finale. The juniors were victorious in the final game winning 26-24.

"I enjoyed participating in something that would help pay for the junior/senior Prom," Neville said. "I am looking forward to Prom."

Madisen Ford and Emily Steinbeck coached one of the junior teams. Nevaeh Bege-man and Annabelle Mandina coached the other junior team.

"It was very enjoyable and entertaining to be a part of,"

Ford said. "It was an exciting environment and everyone was interested in the game."

Aubrey Beard and Laura Empson coached one of the senior teams. Corryn Steinbeck and Kaydon Iman coached the other senior team. The coaches all play on the OHS volleyball teams.

"There was a good crowd, and the athletes loved playing," Meler said. "The kids seemed to enjoy goofing off and liked the practices because they actually worked with their team and coaches."

Junior participants were Elijah Ashby, Jonas Bennett, Will Fox, Hunter Garrison, Hunter Hansken, Mason Hawkins, Hunter Helmig, Nathan Pardee, Zachary Reynolds, Wesley Tolbert and Austin Van Buren.

Senior participants were Nick Conn, Brett Gittinger, Clayton Hazelrigg, Robbie Magruder, Dallas Martin, Vincent Monarca, Cale Neville, Logan Parks, Dalen Rickey, Cooper Stiles, Jordan Tribble, Lucas West and Matthew Younce.

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19 laps around the school which equalled approximately two miles. Afterwards, snacks were available in the cafeteria.

Bradley said the students enjoyed being able to run through the hallways of the school, something that is usually not allowed.

"I enjoyed watching the students who normally would

not participate, enjoy a social event," Bradley said.

Forty-five people participated including students in sixth, seventh and eighth grades as well as parents and siblings who wanted to join in. Teachers and staff members who participated were awarded a day to wear jeans to work.

The inaugural Glow Run was

so popular, Bradley said she plans to host a Glow Run next year in October, so participants can wear Halloween costumes.

"Middle School students are not allowed to wear costumes to school anymore, so I think the students will enjoy being able to wear their costumes and show them off to their friends," Bradley said.

Odessa high school girls soccer faces many learning curves



LET'S KICK IT | Abbi King, OHS sophomore, is excited to be a member of the first OHS girls soccer team.

By Kiley Adams
OHS girls soccer debuted this spring, and athletes who are new to the sport faced a daunting learning curve as they tried out for the teams.

Abbi King, sophomore, said she decided to try out for soccer even though she hasn't played soccer since she was young and played in the youth league.

"I was very nervous about trying out for the team. I wasn't exactly sure how soccer was going to go since it's the first year we've had a high school soccer team," King said.

King ran and participated in jumping events in track last year, but she decided she wanted to try out for soccer.

King said that soccer is very similar to another sport she plays, basketball, because there is quite a bit of running, but soccer is unique because you can't use your hands a majority of the time and that's challenging.

"Even though I haven't played in a long time, I've always loved soccer. I wanted to see new faces and experience something new with others who are doing the exact same thing," King said.

While soccer is new for most,

King said the girls are learning how to work as a team and the coaches are helping them pull together.

Matt Swanson, OHS history teacher, is the varsity coach, and Amanda Drinkwater, OHS Spanish teacher, is the JV coach. King said she enjoys the coaches' sense of humor because it makes playing fun, and their coaching style makes it easy to learn.

"I'm learning a lot of new skills, along with my teammates. We're learning the correct spacing in our positions, one-touch kicks and headers," King said.

King said the most frustrating part of playing soccer is when the ball doesn't go where you want it to and knowing when you should and shouldn't take the ball. She said learning basic skills, including footwork, and only being able to use your feet make soccer difficult. Even though it is their first season, King is hopeful that it is a successful one.

"I hope we continue to become stronger as a team and win a lot of games," King said.

OHS Student Council attends state convention

By Jenna Roncelli
OHS Student Council members Britney Boutross, junior, and Aydan McMahon, freshman, attended the 70th annual Missouri Association of Student Councils state convention, Leadership On Tour, held March 8-10 at Lebanon High School.

As first-year members of Student Council, Angie Sallee, StuCo sponsor, said the girls have shown exceptional leadership and commitment to the organization's projects, including volunteering to attend the state convention.

Sallee, who accompanied the students, said it had been over ten years since OHS students attended the state convention. Coincidentally, the conference was held at Sallee's alma mater.

During the convention, they saw keynote speakers, attended discussion groups and meetings

and participated in a wide variety of activities to help them improve their own Student Council.

Boutross commented her favorite speaker was Kevin Wazner because he was hilarious, and his session was fun.

"We tied in a bingo game, and we won a kazoo. I learned that being nice is not the same as being kind. I also learned to follow my passion, and that I can help people without even knowing it," Boutross said.

Boutross noted that being nice is something you do after something has happened, like reacting to someone dropping a pencil and then picking it up. However, kindness is proactive, such as bringing your teacher's favorite drink to her simply because she is awesome.

"We learned the importance of making connections with other

people and letting them know how important they are," Sallee said.

The music group Dawson Hollow performed for the students. The StuCo members also sent a photograph of their group to Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida to show their support after the recent school shooting.

Finally, students participated in service projects making handmade blankets for children in the hospital and also stuffing Easter eggs for a local Easter egg hunt.

Sallee believes attendance at convention is vital to enhancing Student Council at OHS as they are able to bring back new ideas to implement.

OHS StuCo plans to attend the 2019 MASC convention which will be held at Lindbergh High School.

Odessa High School prom committee plans a memorable night using creative technique

By Ashley Dye
OHS Prom, Among the Stars, will be held on April 14 at Stoney Creek Inn in Independence. Heather Meler, science teacher and junior class head sponsor, is in charge of the event. Terry Stever, history teacher, is assisting Meler.

"The kids have been really creative this year," Meler said. "The Prom committee is building all of the decorations, such as table toppers, Zodiac panels (with each Zodiac sign over a galaxy background) and chandeliers from

scratch. The Zodiac panels have been difficult with all the steps taken to get them right."

The OHS Prom Committee is made up of the following junior volunteers: Justus Ellison, Maddie Murry, Madelyn Lietz, Alyson Tuckwiller, Delaney Sisk, Bryce Sullivan, Ashlyn Hardesty, Brylee Duncan, Kylie Wilder and Caroline Peek.

"Everything that could go wrong with the Zodiac panels did, but we still managed to make them look good," Murry said. "I am really excited about

the entry way. We will have sheer gossamer fabric with lights draped to tree decorations."

The committee wanted a theme that was "classy", so they came up with different themes for the junior class to vote on. The vote ended up being a tie between Among the Stars and Masquerade. The committee broke the tie, deciding on Among the Stars.

The Prom Committee has organized several fundraisers throughout the school year to raise money for the event. Fundraisers have included flower sales, Christmas Grams, working concessions at various games and recently hosting the PowderBuff volleyball game.

Students who volunteered to work concessions received a \$5 discount on their \$25 Prom ticket. Juniors and seniors in good standing may attend the event with an approved guest.

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