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THE GROWLER

Odessa High School, Odessa, Missouri

Student involvement is Gust's goal



ALEXA GUST OHS Student Council President

By Gracee Gurney & Shayne Lewis

Alexa Gust, OHS senior, plans to go to college and pursue a degree that will allow her to help others. She is not sure yet what that will be. However, she has already begun to help the OHS student body through her role as Student Council president.

Gust has been involved in StuCo since the fourth grade. She has enjoyed helping make decisions that affect the student body.

"I joined Student Council initially because I wanted to be a part of a team that made our district better," Gust said.

Gust decided she wanted to run for StuCo president because she felt like it was the next step after serving as class president her freshman through junior years.

"Alexa makes me smile," Angie Sallee, OHS StuCo sponsor, said. "I love Alexa because she has the heart of a people person, and she does everything

with others in mind. She is an enthusiastic leader who cares about the students and staff at Odessa High School."

"Being StuCo president is very important to me. I love the opportunities it has opened for me, and I love being a part of the team that gets to work everyday at making the quality and togetherness of OHS better," Gust said.

As StuCo president, Alexa aspires to get everyone involved in something at OHS because she believes all students have roles to fill. She wants to help the school community come together and be unified to create a more family-like atmosphere. To help prepare for this task, Gust attended a StuCo Vision 6 conference where schools from 10 states met at Liberty North High School and focused on making StuCo improvements.

"One of the biggest challenges that we have had this year is getting everyone involved. Instead of meeting once a month, we meet once a week. It is hard

because people are so busy, but the student council finds a way around it," Gust said.

So far this year, StuCo has organized and run Homecoming activities like usual; however, they decided to require members to attend the dance this year which helped boost attendance over previous years.

"I think making StuCo members go to the dance helped with the number of students who attended. We had over 300 students attend," Gust said.

StuCo members also helped run Special Olympics, which is Missouri Association of Student Councils' charity of choice. In October, Alexa helped organize Socktober where Student Councils in the Trails West region competed against each other to collect the most pairs of socks to donate to the Community Services League. They collected 584 pairs of socks to help those in need. Odessa won the competition and was awarded a scholarship to summer leadership camp.

To finish out the fall, Alexa helped run a veterans breakfast and helped with Thanksgiving donation baskets.

Gust said she has some advice for the future StuCo president: "Be open to new ideas and be extremely flexible. As StuCo president, you are expected to plan and be in attendance at numerous events. Also, it's important to see StuCo as an equal to all other sports and clubs you may be involved in."

In addition to StuCo, Alexa is involved in choir, tennis, the school musical and singing at her church.

Stiles elected to state DECA office



Cooper Stiles, OHS senior, is elected DECA Vice President of Advocacy, one of the four highest Missouri DECA offices.

By Alex Wood

Cooper Stiles, OHS senior, was elected to one of the four highest Missouri DECA offices on October 16 at Lodge of the Four Seasons, Lake Ozark.

Months of preparation and hard work paid off when Stiles was named DECA Vice President of Advocacy. Odessa's DECA chapter is one of more than 150 Missouri chapters totaling 7,500 students.

"Going into the election, I was pretty nervous," Stiles said. "When I won, it was a crazy feeling like I've never felt before. It was just all the hard work, all the dedication, really coming together."

Stiles emphasized everyone in his local DECA chapter played a role in his success. "Whether it was being in the video, helping me with the test, practicing reviewing, it definitely was not just all by myself," Stiles said.

Jessica Wade, OHS DECA

advisor, said she knew he would have an edge over the other candidates because of his unique summer experience as well as his dedication to preparing for the test and interviews.

"He had an internship this summer in Congressman Emanuel Cleaver's office and is currently the media director for a Missouri House of Representatives campaign," Wade said.

To be a candidate, Stiles had to complete a number of prerequisites. The first was a test over the Missouri DECA program as a whole.

Once Stiles scored a minimum of 70%, he was able to move onto a panel of two judges. After answering a number of questions, the judges decided if he moved onto the third and final requirement: speaking in front of 1,000 people.

"You get up there on stage, and look out on this crowd of 1000 people, and you just give your best answer [to a prompt question]," Stiles said.

"DECA prepares you to become a leader in the future, in whatever profession it may be. One of the most important skills DECA teaches you is not only to market a business or a corporation, but to market yourself, when you're interviewing for jobs. You're prepared for that," Stiles said.

Stiles said he plans on going to college and eventually on to law school.

"DECA will help me get there," Stiles said.

DeCamp's dedication shows in her pictures



Dianne DeCamp wins photography award.

By Hanna Goodman

Dianne DeCamp had been the OHS attendance secretary for 19 years, however, that is not what defines her at work. She is known as the face behind her camera as she puts her hobby in action photographing students at OHS and around the community.

"I appreciate her dedication to taking pictures of our kids, her willingness to give endless hours to cheer on our sports and activities and her love for each and every student at OHS," Buffie McConville, OHS principal, said. "She is one in a million, and we are better because she is a part of our OHS family."

In October, DeCamp was presented a Photography award from the Missouri Press Association Newspaper Contest for a picture published in *The Odessan*.

The photo showed the reflection of the Odessa four-way during Eat In the Street, a fundraiser, hosted by Downtown Odessa, Inc. The photo was sent to the Missouri Press Association by *The Odessan* staff. In fact, DeCamp didn't know her photograph was entered until she won the award.

Hannah Spaar, news editor

at *The Odessan*, presented the award to DeCamp at OHS. *The Odessan* publishes DeCamp's pictures from time to time.

"I was totally surprised when Hannah presented the award to me," DeCamp said. "It was such an honor to be recognized for something you love to do."

DeCamp didn't become interested in photography until she was 25. She said she just wanted to capture memories of her children. When her children, Suzanne and David were four and seven, she wanted to be able to photograph moments that truly showed their personalities.

Now, DeCamp has moved on to photographing her grandchildren, Sophia Williamson and Malachi Alvarez, Cathy Alvarez's children. Alvarez dates DeCamp's son, David.

"One of my joys is taking pictures of my grandkids. It's so fun being a grandma," DeCamp said.

DeCamp also enjoys taking pictures at Odessa youth events. Many people ask her to take family pictures or wedding pictures, but she prefers photographing more informal events such as kindergarten graduations, plays, band and choir concerts and sporting events.

Anatomy class utilizes dissection

By Kiley Adams

Students in Heather Meler's Anatomy & Physiology class recently dissected sheep heads, learning first-hand about the structures of the eye and the brain. Labs and dissections are an important part of the weighted course offered to juniors and seniors. Anatomy helps prepare students who plan on pursuing a degree in a science or medical-related field.

"The students get a better grasp of what they are studying," Meler said. "You can talk about an eye and point to pictures, but actually taking apart the pieces of an eye and seeing the structures that make it up, helps the students understand more."

The course, which has a prerequisite of a B+ in Biology or teacher approval, includes a detailed look into the body's organs and systems. Topics to be studied include levels of organization, body cell types, and an overview of all the body's tissues, organs and systems. Most units have corresponding labs to help students learn.

Rebecca Engen, senior, plans to major in biology and eventually become a surgeon. She said anatomy class helped her see

"It is so fun getting to know my students, their family members and people from our community," DeCamp said. "Little Brooklyn Kleoppel was the first one to call me the 'Picture Lady', and now if people don't know my name, they call me Picture Lady."

While she enjoys photographing numerous events, her favorite sport to photograph is basketball. She enjoys getting action shots with the crowd in the background showing their "Bulldog pride". She says these shots are not easy to get, though.

On a typical game night, she will take anywhere from 1000 to 1500 pictures. After the games, she takes several hours going through the shots to select the best photos. Then,



IT'S ALL FUN AND GAMES UNTIL YOU LOSE AN EYE | Maddie Murry, Allison Tuckweiller and Madelyn Lietz, juniors, dissect sheep heads in Heather Meler's class.

what she might be doing in the future and helped her see if she would like it or not.

"Overall, anatomy was a difficult class, but I liked dissecting and seeing what's inside everything," Engen said.

Dissecting the sheep head started with the eyes and moved on to other structures in the head, including the brain.

"Dissecting is good to help students get past their self-set limitations," Meler said. "It helps them see the world in a different way and experience new things they didn't think

they would necessarily want to do or believe they could do."

"I liked anatomy and the dissection," Maddie Murry, junior, said. "Dissecting the sheep heads fit well with what we were learning at the time. We were studying the brain and the special senses, like our eyes and how our nose and mouth work, so it made everything fall together."

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DeCamp's husband of 46 years, David W., is supportive and encourages her to go to games and events, even if it means he will have to make dinner for himself that night.

"He reminds me about any events around town, so I can go and take pictures," DeCamp said. "He is a fantastic wood carver and furniture maker, so it's nice to have something of my own that people know me for."

"Mrs. DeCamp might be one of my favorite people in the whole world," McConville said. "She has done more to promote our school and students than anyone I know."

Second grade field trip fun for sporty and nature-loving students

By Gracee Gurney

Second-graders attended a field-trip November 2 and November 3 at Arrowhead Stadium, the home of the Kansas City Chiefs, and Burr Oak Woods, a nature center in Blue Springs. Half the class attended each day.

Matthew Klamm, McQuerry PE teacher, organized this trip which ties into the Physical Education and Health curriculum and the NFL Play 60 campaign which encourages students to be active for 60 minutes a day. The goal of the campaign is to help prevent children from becoming overweight or obese.

At Arrowhead, students toured the stadium for more than hour to get in 60 minutes of walking. They saw the locker room, the press box, and were

able to go down to the field and walk through the tunnels.

They also participated in the Chiefs Sports Lab which has hands-on and interactive computer activities. The lab's activities focus on getting students to be active, have good nutrition and live a healthy life.

Students also logged minutes of walking at Burr Oak Woods on the nature trails, visited the nature center and learned about snakes, fish and other animals. This is the eighth year the second-graders have gone on this field trip.

"I plan to do it every year as long as I can," Klamm said. "It is a great time. The students enjoyed the whole field trip, from the hiking trails to visiting the stadium."

Attention OHS: calling all card game fans

By Jenna Roncelli

OHS freshmen, Drew Covey and Noah Pulliam, were instrumental in forming the new OHS card club, Magic the Gathering Players' Club. The freshmen asked Amanda Twombly, OHS counselor, to sponsor the club.

"I wanted to start the club because my friends and I love playing Magic the Gathering," Covey said.

"It's important because it's a fun experience to play the game and make new friends," Pulliam said.

Twombly thinks the card club will be a good addition to the school's activities. Her goal is to grow the club to have enough students to start holding tournaments at OHS.

"I am looking forward to the tournaments the most," Covey said.

"It's kind of a niche interest, and I think there are a lot of kids who are interested in

what they call 'tabletop games'," Twombly said.

Magic the Gathering is a trading card game where the players, called planeswalkers, build their own decks and fight against other players. Players start with 20 lives, and the goal is to get the opponent down to zero lives.

"I am excited to play games other than Magic the Gathering too," Powell Medlock, sophomore, said.

Meetings are Tuesday after school until 4:15 p.m. So far there are seven members of the club, but the club is open to anyone who wants to come. If students do not have MTG decks, extras are available. Students will also be provided a tutorial if needed.

"I think it's just a good, fun game for kids who may not be interested in some of the other clubs," Twombly said.

Family Fitness Night was a success

By Ashley Dye

PTO Family Fitness Night was held from 6 to 7 p.m. on November 28 at McQuerry Elementary. Families participated in CrossFit, yoga and aerobics.

"The night was very successful," Daniel Armstrong, McQuerry principal, said. "Over 115 students and parents were in attendance. It seemed like everyone had some smiles and sweat by the time they left."

Sarah Brentlinger, parent, attended with her four children, Savannah, Isabella, Brooklyn and Maverick. Brentlinger enjoyed the event and bonding with her children, and said it helped to "wear them out."

Participants, including teachers, children and parents, were divided into three groups that rotated through the three activities. Each activity lasted approximately 15 minutes.

In CrossFit for Kids, partici-

pants learned how to properly do burpees, squats and pushups. After learning the proper form, the instructor, Jennifer Butler, worked the exercises into a game. Butler is an instructor at CrossFit Higginsville. CrossFit training includes strength and conditioning.

"I think it's good for them to learn that you can be fit and have fun," Butler said.

The game was played by running and picking up an Uno card. The color and number of the card determined what exercise participants would do and how many repetitions the group had to complete. After completing the tasks, the group could run and select another card. The group who had the most cards at the end of the game, won.

The participants then cooled down with a yoga session. The instructor, Juli Stever, asked

the children questions about their favorite flowers, animals, etc. to get them comfortable and relaxed. Then, they started practicing yoga poses. They worked on the tree pose, the star pose and incorporated poses into a short dance move. After yoga, the children ate healthy snacks including a cheese stick and a banana or apple.

The final session included an aerobics video on GoNoodler. The dance video was set to funny music. The kids liked to "open up your jaws and chomp it" when they opened their arms at an angle and clapped with the video.

"The benefit of Family Fitness Night was having families come together and have an exercise goal for the evening," Armstrong said. "Hopefully the exercise as a family will continue on past this one night."

OHS choir students compete for district contest slots

By Shayne Lewis

OHS choir students are preparing for the first ever sing-offs to secure District Contest spots which will be held March 23 at State Fair Community College, Sedalia.

There are more singers signed up for solos and small ensembles this year than Harry Hamblin, OHS choir director, is allowed to enter at District Contest. He has 47 soloists and six small ensembles and only 45 total entries are allowed.

"I think it is fantastic to have so many students interested in working on solos and small ensembles," Hamblin said.

To narrow down the entries, Hamblin will hold the sing-off January 29 through February 2. Singers will perform for Hamblin, and he said if one performer sings it perfectly and another has a mistake, that

could be the difference between going to the festival or not.

"Taking a solo or ensemble takes dedication and work, but the outcome is always worth it. It's definitely one of the best decisions I've made," Keiton Johnson, sophomore, said.

In addition to preparing for contest, the choirs have a busy winter schedule. The choirs hosted a Music Trivia Night fundraiser December 2 to raise money to widen the door to the high school's main gymnasium. The grand piano will not fit through the current doors, so it has to be partially disassembled, pushed through the door, and then reassembled.

"It's not good for the piano to disassemble it, so we are raising money to widen the doorway so the piano will just roll right through," Hamblin said.

Choir students had a special

treat on December 4 as well. Hamblin took 12 of the students to see Voces8 a vocal ensemble from England, at Gano Chapel at William Jewell College.

"It was amazing," Olivia Hawk, freshman Chamber Choir member, said. "Their voices blended so well. It was just beautiful."

Finally, Concert and Chamber Choirs performed their Winter Concert on December 11. Hamblin said he was excited the choirs performed "Please Stay", which had an anti-suicide message.

"I listened to 'Please Stay', and I loved the message of the song. It has a beautiful melody and was a great challenge for the choirs to work on," Hamblin said.



VFW essay winners announced in assembly



Winners of the VFW essay contest were announced at the OMS Veterans Day Assembly: Charles Harvey, VFW Chaplain, Taelor Horne, third place, Danika Dutel, second place, Alyssa Bullock, first place, and Judy Harvey, Auxiliary Secretary.

By Holley Salisbury

OMS celebrated Veterans Day on November 10 with a breakfast and an assembly honoring those who have served in the military. Winners of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), essay contest were announced and prizes were awarded.

The OMS Honor Choirs also performed at the assembly. The seventh and eighth grade choir sang "Land of Liberty", and the sixth grade choir sang "Wave the Flag". Veterans were recognized. Cayden Wells and Pierce Wisdom, eighth-graders, invited special guests, Well's father and Wisdom's grandfather. Both veterans received special recognition at the assembly.

Essay winners were as follows: Alyssa Bullock, seventh-grader, won first place; Danika Dutel, seventh-grader, won second place; and Taelor Horne, seventh-grader, won third place. The essay topic was "Why is Patriotism Day Important?" Nineteen students entered the contest. Judy Harvey, VFW auxiliary secretary, and Charles Harvey, VFW captain, recognized the essay contest winners and handed out the cash prizes.

Bullock said she researched the topic, and her parents helped her proofread her essay. She noted that reading her paper at the assembly was out of her comfort zone.

"I am a very self-conscious person," Bullock said, "and I don't like getting up in front of crowds."

Dutel said she wrote about how the people were separated by race and that it would be different if it happened today.

"I was nervous, but once I started reading, it was better," Dutel said. "When I was done and saw everyone clapping, I was okay with it."

Horne said she was inspired by football players sitting or kneeling during the national anthem. She noted that members of the military fight for citizens to have rights.

"It was terrifying," Horne said. "It didn't help that I messed up just a little bit."

Amanda Pierce's husband, E.J., is a member of the National Guard. He stayed after the assembly to speak with students about his service. Pierce is the P.E. teacher at OMS.

Chris Doering, assistant principal/activities director, and

Humana Health app helps teachers discover competitive edge

By Victoria Miller

The hallways of the Odessa R-7 schools are filled with teachers zipping back and forth, checking their "watches" and continuing on. While a visitor might think the teachers are all late for a meeting, they are actually tracking their steps and earning rewards with a new insurance incentive.

The school district switched to Humana health insurance for the 2017-18 school year, and one of the changes included access to the Go365 wellness and rewards program. One goal of the program is to make getting healthier easier and more fun for employees. It also provides the district with a chance to lower insurance premiums.

Teachers are taking the challenge seriously. Paula Hawk, gifted teacher, walked 1,004,685 steps in October, the highest of anyone in the district.

"I never knew I was a competitive person, until I started doing this and it just brought something out in me that I didn't know was there," Hawk said. "Some of my other teacher friends are walking with me, and we are all losing weight.

We have all noticed that we are sleeping better, and we just feel a lot better overall," Hawk said.

"Teachers get to work early to walk, or they stay after school to walk," Chad Buford, OMS health teacher, said. "It gets the teachers active and motivates them to start exercising."

Don Aulbert, OMS social studies teacher, likes the app that allows employees to earn points by going head-to-head against co-workers and compete for the most steps taken or pounds lost. He said moving around the room while teaching helps him log steps and earn points.

"Points help motivate people to do better," Aulbert said. "Look at Mrs. Hawk. She walked over a million steps in October. When I was going over to the high school for football practice, I would get a lot of steps that way. I also coach girls' basketball, and I run and play with them at practice. I am not a coach that just says 'go run' and just stand there not doing anything. I go and work with the girls to get my steps in."

The Go365 app motivates and rewards employees for making

healthier choices in life. For example, points are awarded for tracking steps, logging workouts, completing health assessments and biometric screenings, getting a flu shot, and getting dental and vision exams to name a few.

As a result, more and more employees are seen sporting fitness devices. The devices, which are compatible with the Go365 app record data and communicate with the app. Employees can move through five levels. Everyone starts at blue status, but when enough points are earned, they can move to bronze, silver, gold and finally platinum. Accumulated points can be spent as dollars in the app store.

There is a district incentive to the Go365 program as well. The district saves a percentage off the upcoming renewal year based on how many members reach silver status or above.

"By encouraging staff members to reach the silver level," Roger Feagan, assistant superintendent, said, "it should decrease the cost of renewal for the upcoming year, and in turn allow that money to be utilized elsewhere for our students instead of paying insurance premiums."




Angela Gregson, Language Arts teacher, organized the assembly.

"The kids seemed to enjoy the assembly. They were respectful, quiet, and understood the meaning of the assembly," Doering said.

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