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THE GROWLER

Odessa High School, Odessa, Missouri

OMS stands strong against bullying

By Erika Cowan & Emily Woods

OMS stands strong against bullying with advisory curriculum, student organizations and committees all playing a part in preventing bullying.

Bullying has become an increasingly large social problem for children and teens and can cause emotional problems and low self-esteem; however, help is available and should be utilized. School counselors are a great resource.

As technology improves, students tend to think that they won't get in trouble for bullying using a technological device, but that is not the case. In fact, OMS has decided to take action against cyber-bullying by establishing a Safe Schools Program.

OMS students fought for a law to be established for anti-bullying and won. OMS Peer Helpers presented a petition

last year for a cyber-bullying ordinance to the Odessa Board of Aldermen which easily passed and ensures that minors take full responsibility for their bullying actions as well as their parents.

"Peer Helpers encouraged students to sign a petition to help us keep students safe and help make Odessa an even better place to live and raise our children," said Hal Davis, OMS counselor and Peer Helpers sponsor.

Peer Helpers also serve a role in identifying students who may be targets for bullying. These students try to help put an end to bullying and even talk to the bystanders when possible.

There is also an OMS Safety Committee that has made significant contributions towards ending bullying behaviors. This committee is made up of students, parents, teachers, staff and community members. They hope to discourage bullying

and warn children about the dangers and the outcome of bullying.

Anti-bullying lessons are also taught during advisory classes at OMS. Evelyn Morgan, OMS media specialist is in charge of planning the advisory curriculum. According to Morgan, cyber-safety curriculum is a state mandate, and the anti-bullying lessons fit well with cyber-safety. The lessons are modified and age-appropriate for each grade, according to Morgan.

"We wanted to focus on character education and be a part of the solution," said Morgan.

Also, each year, the students take an OMS Safe Schools Survey. This survey asks the students bullying-related questions such as if they witness bullying, have been affected by bullying and where bullying happens. This data is used to address any concerns.



OMS Peer Helpers, Keiton Johnson, seventh grader; Maddie Murry and Ashley Dye, eighth graders; Abbie Baner and Megan Burch, seventh graders, present their petition for a cyber-bullying ordinance to the Odessa Board of Aldermen. The ordinance easily passed.



Connor Levy, OMS sixth-grader, uses Video Phone technology to communicate with fluent signers.

OMS student uses new technology to communicate

By Cassadee Griffith

Connor Levy, OMS sixth-grader, uses new technology to communicate with friends. Over a month ago, Levy, who is deaf, received an iPad which he uses to talk to his friends who do not sign.

Linda Walsh, sixth grade English teacher, asked OMS STEP to purchase the iPad, which Levy can also use to read. The iPad helps to give him more independence.

Levy also has a Video Phone. He can sign to other people who are deaf using this technology. He can also communicate with anyone using the Video Phone because he can sign to the computer camera, and an operator will voice what Levy signs and vice versa.

"My iPad is cool because I can ask friends questions about things I want to know, and I can

talk to cute girls and my friends. I love my iPad," said Levy.

Levy practices using the Video Phone on Wednesdays and can use it whenever he needs to talk to his mom or in an emergency.

Not all of Levy's friends sign, so this is useful for him. However, some of his friends have learned sign language, such as Olivia Hawk.

"Connor and I have been friends since kindergarten, and he has come over to my house multiple times," said Hawk.

Levy usually talks to all hearing people through an interpreter.

"The Video Phone is a great opportunity for Connor to communicate with fluent signers. The iPad has given him the chance to chat with his peers without an interpreter," said Laura Scott, deaf interpreter.

Editorial: Raising awareness against bullying

High school is supposed to be the best of times. Students are supposed to not have a care in the world and their biggest worries should be their plans are for Friday night. But to some students, their biggest worry is whether or not they are going to walk down the hall and hear laughter directed toward them or if an embarrassing picture is going to be posted online. Sometimes this can be overlooked, but the truth is, that the term for this is bullying.

What is the definition of bullying? According to the Oxford dictionary a bully is a person who uses strength or power to harm or intimidate those who are weaker.

The signs of bullying are not just hitting or calling others names. Sure, those are the well known signs, but some cases go as far as death threats, stalking and directing the threats toward the family.

According to the National Education Association, about 160,000 students miss school every day because they are

fearful that someone is either going to hurt them or tease them. Some might not see this as a shocking statistic but, when it comes to education, every student matters and bullying affects a lot of students day to day.

The National School Safety Center says that American schools have about 2.1 million students who bully and about 2.7 million victims of bullying, but this may be an understatement, because bullying happens everyday.

At times, when students witness bullying they may feel helpless. But in reality, there is always something students can do.

According to OHS guidance counselor, Mary Williams and Vice Principal, Buffie McConville, when students are either being bullied or witness bullying the best thing to do is to go straight to the administration and report it. If the student doesn't feel comfortable, tell another adult that they trust. The main point is to tell somebody. Don't let it go on.

Now, students can't just rely on other students to notice signs of bullying or to report bullying. Parents also need to notice the signs of bullying and know what to do when a bullying situation is being reported.

According to the National Crime Prevention Council and OHS guidance counselor, Mary Williams, and vice principal, Buffie McConville, kids who are bullied often stop participating in extra-curricular activities, they have fewer friends and their grades fall. Some physical signs may appear such as torn clothing and bruising.

The guidance counselor at OHS, Mary Williams, and vice principal, Buffie McConville, both agree that if a parent has a report of bullying they should, first, question that child.

Second, if the parent has a strong suspicion that it is happening at school they should, go to the administration at their students school.

Third, if the parent has a fear that it is severe enough, they should contact the local law enforcement.

Odessa R-7 school district has stepped in to try and decrease the percentages as mentioned earlier.

At McQuerry and the middle school, teachers and staff talk about the signs and what they can do as mentioned earlier. The High school has a discussion with the students and the teachers about what to look for and what to do when they witness it or are being bullied.



First-graders in Laura Kelley's class proudly display their homemade valentines.

OHS Super Mileage Team prepares for competition

By Savanna Middleton

Students watch the race cars go around the track as they cheer on their favorite drivers. The excitement of the crowd can be felt as the cars roar around the track. The students are absorbed by the race. Is this a fieldtrip to the Kansas Speedway? No, it is the OHS Super Mileage Team cheering on their club's modified go-kart.

Jason Rathert, OHS Industrial Technology teacher, is the adviser for the OHS Super Mileage Team. He also sponsors the TSA Club (Technology Students of America). Rathert has taught for 13 years at OHS. Zachary and Heather Meler, OHS science teachers, also help with the team.

Last year, the Super Mileage Team entered two cars in competition, and the cars placed first and second. Both cars averaged over 80 miles per gallon. They won the Pitt Award over nine other schools who competed at Warrensburg. Odessa was the only school to enter two cars.

"At last year's competition, I felt we did really well. We have come a long way from our first beginnings to where we are right now. I am very

proud of how well the students worked on the cars and raced them during the competition," Rathert said.

They are hoping for even better results at competition this year. The cars are judged on fuel efficiency.

The Super Mileage Team rebuilt the car completely this year and made improvements. They improved the fuel mileage by making the car more aerodynamic, so the car could travel more efficiently.

The Super Mileage Team is preparing for the 10th annual competition on April 14 held at the Warrensburg Safety Center. OHS has competed for the past nine years.

This year's drivers will be Erica Fieth and Ryan Robbins, seniors, and Luke Drenon and Sadie Myers, sophomores.

Robbins said, "Either you are good at driving, or you are not. If a driver is hard on a tire, it could blow. Last year we did blow a tire, but we won using duct tape. We hope to take first place again because we have refined our cars this year."

The purpose is for the students to compete in designing and building a safe vehicle that can achieve the highest fuel mileage possible.

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Eric Sions, junior, welds the frame of the Super Mileage Team's competition car.

OHS speech and debate team prepares for district competition

By William Johnson

People are talking to the walls, arguing with themselves or screaming about Charleston. No, it isn't an insane asylum; this is the speech and debate classroom.

Speech and debate is not a class where students complete book work; rather it is all about talking and performing in front of others. On any given day, students may be found talking to the walls, memorizing dialogue, bouncing ideas off each other, performing one man shows in the front of the class or just quietly working like any other classroom.

However, all this comes together on competition days to allow students to be prepared to quickly and efficiently memorize lines, deliver arguments based on research, present theatrical performances or simply read

poetry pieces for a variety of competitions in front of multiple judges.

"It's a lot of work, but it's worth it," said Sam Haley, president of speech and debate. Haley is a senior at OHS.

It seems the preparation is successful because the students have won over 40 medals so far this year. In addition to performing well, the program has grown in popularity increasing to 45 students this year.

OHS hosted the OHS Optimist Invitational Speech and Debate Tournament on February 27-28. Competitions were held on Friday evening and all day Saturday.

"Our invitational speech tournament is a great fundraiser for the Performing Arts Department," said Sarah Renfrow, speech and debate teacher. Renfrow has taught at OHS for 11 years.

For the event to run smoothly, they needed approximately 12 judges for the first day and 35

judges the second day. It takes a lot of time and preparation to make the event a success. First, judges and sponsors have to be found. Then, scheduling must be done to make sure that no one debates against someone from their own school, or if competing in several events, to make sure they don't debate against someone more than once. Also, the schedule should not place a competitor with the same judge more than once.

The event had a hospitality room offering dinner on Friday and breakfast, snacks and lunch on Saturday. So, while hosting is a great way to earn money for the department, it comes with a lot of work.

"I realize it is a big time commitment, but we always get wonderful feedback from the judges that it is such a rewarding experience," said Renfrow.

Renfrow said she hopes the program will continue to grow and be successful, and she will miss the graduating seniors.



Sarah Heard and Connor Marshall, juniors, practice for their One-Act play titled *Grave Concerns*. The One-Act play will be preformed at district and conference competition.

OHS choirs prepare for contest

By Breanna Ray

Choir competition season is near, so students are diligently preparing the pieces which were chosen with careful thought.

Chamber and Concert Choirs will both sing a song in a foreign language with Chamber Choir singing a Spanish-Italian song and Concert Choir singing in Latin.

Harry Hamblin, OHS choir teacher, said that he heard the song Break of Day this summer and fell in love with it. He described the song as slow and pretty. He picked a fast and upbeat song, a Spanish Renaissance madrigal, to contrast with Break of Day and round out the selections.

Hamblin chose Festival Sanctus for Concert Choir because it has always been a favorite of his.

"The song is just really cool. It has a joyous feel to it. It is rhythmically interesting and challenging, but very upbeat

and fun," said Hamblin.

The students voted on their favorite of three songs, and selected For the Beauty of the Earth for the final song.

The choirs will travel on March 30 to Boonville to compete in District Large Ensemble Contest. Odessa has a history of performing well, so students are feeling the pressure to perform at a high level.

"During competition, it is hard to get over feeling nervous the first time; however, the older I get, the easier competitions become. We are practicing on getting everyone to work together mechanically and convey the type of emotion that Mr. Hamblin is looking for," said Sean Morris, senior, Chamber Choir member.

Morris also said that he believes they are on the right track to becoming successful, and their blend is better than other groups he has heard this year.

"I have a lot of really good students. They are hardworking students as well," said Hamblin. He directs Chamber, Concert, Men's and Women's Choirs. Men's and Women's Choirs performed at a Christmas concert and will perform in a spring concert as well.

The choirs prepare for competition every day during class and will soon begin merging for a joint practice during BEST because Chamber Choir will perform with Concert Choir at competition.

Hamblin would like to acknowledge Chamber Choir for being asked to perform at a ceremony honoring Mary Lynn Lightfoot who is being inducted into the Odessa R-7 Public Foundation Hall of Fame on April 11 at the middle school gymnasium. Lightfoot served as choir director at OHS in the 1970s and is an internationally recognized choral composer.

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JV boys are strong in their free throws

By Luke Norman

JV boys' basketball team ended the season February 26 at Harrisonville with a 34-48 loss. The team had hoped to add a few more wins to their 2-17 record; however, the game experience helped them live out their motto for the season, "get better every day."

"This year's season was tough because we played against high-level competition. However, we improved on rebounding and learned that we have to execute to win games. That is how we won our first game against Wellington-Napoleon," said Cale Neville, freshman point guard.

The game against Wellington-Napoleon was a close one with Odessa pulling out the win

35-32.

The team also won 53-40 against Clever in the Bolivar JV Tournament.

Ryan Robinson, OHS history teacher and JV coach, said, "We improved on execution of plays and we are much more comfortable and more aggressive."

Jacob Moore, sophomore post man, said that the team's strengths were free-throw shooting and shot selection, and the weaknesses were rebounding and communication on both offense and defense.

"What made our team different from others was our spirit and determination for team and the game," said Robbie Hime, sophomore guard.



Ty Wagner, junior, looks to pass the ball to a teammate across the court

Odessa R-7 Basketball Records

OHS C-Team Boys
5-12
OHS JV Girls
13-4
Middle School Boys A
10-3
Middle School Boys B
4-10
Middle School Girls A
1-14
Middle School Girls B
3-11



C team girls basketball has speed on their side

By Sydney Smith

OHS girls' basketball C team ended the season 13-4 after a final 43-22 win at home against Grain Valley. They won at Grain Valley earlier in the season 50-32.

Nic King, OMS sixth grade teacher, coaches the team.

King said that the hardest team they played this season was Higginsville. This was the second game of the season played on December 2 in enemy territory. This game came immediately after a close loss on December 1, opening night, against Clinton.

"Higginsville was our hardest team to play because we hadn't adapted to the new team, and we didn't really know how each other played yet. It was hard to work together as a team at the beginning of the season," said Brittany Leap, sophomore.

King said, "Our strength

would have to be our speed, and our weakness would be shooting. We can do well with shooting, but as a team, we could still do better."

Leap, King noted, was one of the strongest players on the team due to her consistency.

To prepare for games, they worked on individual skills and worked on strategies needed to face that week's competition.

The hardest working player, according to King, was Brittany Walquist, sophomore. The most improved player was Kaitlin Black, freshman.

"This was my first season playing basketball. I usually competitively swim in Blue Springs but wanted to give basketball a try. I improved on understanding the game of basketball and am glad that I had the experience," said Black.



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-The Growler
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