

## **OMS rewards students with perfect attendance**

**By Gracie Buxton**

OMS students hurried to the gym past the “no food or drink” sign on the door and headed straight for the cheese and pepperoni pizzas and soda. They sat on the floor and devoured the pizza while listening to music. Others were playing basketball and volleyball or just talking to friends. These students were not rule-breakers but reward recipients.

OMS hosted a pizza party on October 29 to reward students with perfect attendance. Additional incentives throughout the year will include pizza parties at the end of each quarter and vouchers to attend a Royal’s game for perfect attendance for the entire year.

Becky Cowman, OMS social worker, has been in charge of the incentives for the last seven years. Cowman said the incentives do help improve attendance and encourage students to keep track of and monitor their own attendance.

“I have students tell me they work extra hard to not miss, based not only on the incentive to qualify each quarter for the pizza party, but to qualify for all the extra activities that students get to enjoy if they have 90 percent attendance,” Cowman said.

These activities include school dances, field trips, sports, guard and cheerleading among others.

“When I was in grad school,” Cowman said, “I did extensive research on ways to improve school attendance and offering incentives was on the top of the list.”

So, Cowman worked with her administrators and came up with the idea of a quarterly pizza party. Over the years, she said it has grown and improved.

At the end of each quarter, students with perfect attendance go to the gym during their lunch shift and enjoy pizza made by OPAA, soda, chips, cookies and candy. The students also get to socialize and play games. Students play volleyball, basketball, dance, listen to music or just spend time with friends.

“I really enjoyed the food,” Amelia Covey, sixth-grader with perfect attendance, said.

Drake Ellison, eighth grader with perfect attendance, said he had lots of fun dancing and playing basketball.

There were 162 students who were honored for perfect attendance first quarter. Cowman said this was on the high-side of normal. She noted third quarter usually has the lowest attendance due to flu season and the holidays.

In addition to two vouchers to attend a Royal’s game during the summer, students with perfect attendance for the entire year receive a certificate and are honored at an end of the year assembly.

Molly Osborn, seventh grader with perfect attendance, said she is glad there are exceptions for special circumstances. “If it’s a school-related absence, like Special Olympics, then it is excused,” said Osborn.

Ashley Green, eighth grader, said she has several reasons why she wants to come to school each day.

“The opportunity to learn new things you haven’t covered yet, and I don’t want to get behind in my classes,” Green said. “I take pride in coming to school every day, and I like all the staff, including the lunch ladies.”