



April 2021

# THE GROWLER

Odessa High School, Odessa, Missouri

## OMS holds fundraising events for Danielle Allen, math teacher

By Emily Deaton

Odessa Middle School students and staff have been participating in fundraisers for **Danielle Allen**, OMS algebra teacher, who was diagnosed with a rare disorder which has no cure.

Allen first noticed something was off last school year when she was coaching basketball after winter break and had a headache that was so painful she couldn't see. That began her long road to diagnosis and treatments.

On the first day back from Christmas break during the 2019-2020 school year, Allen realized something was wrong; she didn't normally have bad headaches or even headaches in general. Allen talked to colleagues because she was concerned, and **Kendra Malizzi**, OMS principal, suggested she should call her mother to come and get her.

Allen decided she should see her doctor because she feared it could be something worse than a headache. The doctor sent her home with medicine after saying it was probably only a migraine. However, her symptoms continued and intensified. She was incredibly fatigued, and her "migraines" caused her to see stars, have ringing in her ears and experience memory issues.

Then, Allen had an appointment with an ophthalmologist. The doctor informed Allen that her optic nerves were swelling behind her eyes. So, she had more than three hours of testing with an eye specialist, who then referred her to a neurologist. Allen had multiple scans and an MRI which ruled out a brain tumor.

Finally, she received a diagnosis of Idiopathic Intracranial Hypertension (IIH). IIH occurs when pressure inside the skull



Grace Smith and Haley Burke, eighth-graders, present Danielle Allen, OMS Algebra teacher, with a fundraising check. Allen was diagnosed with a rare disorder.

increases for no obvious reasons, and in her case, it was the buildup of spinal fluid, which mimicked a tumor. The condition is chronic, but treatable, and can last years or be lifelong. Fewer than 200,000 cases occur in the United States each year.

Allen has had seven spinal taps so far, but they only relieve her symptoms for a few days. As of now, she doesn't know what the future holds for her, but she does hope her disorder will go into remission. Her neurologist has mentioned the possibility of putting in a shunt, a small catheter that releases fluid from the brain into the stomach. Allen has also learned some techniques to help reduce the triggers that cause her migraines. For example, she turns the lights off in the classroom and uses lamps instead.

She has missed school due to her illness but has also fought through her symptoms to teach when feeling poorly, without showing it.

"She is a great example for our students," Malizzi said.

Allen said she appreciates the

support of the OMS administration.

"The administration is always here for me," Allen said. "If I need to take the day off, or I have a migraine in class and need to take a quick break, Mrs. Malizzi and Mr. Begemann are phenomenal."

Allen also appreciates the help she receives from her husband, **Brannon**, and parents. Her parents are retired teachers, so they take her to and from her doctors' appointments when the doctors don't think it is safe for her to drive. Brannon takes off work to drive her to and from the school when she is having symptomatic days, as well.

"Mrs. Allen has a great personality and is very funny," Malizzi said. "She always does what is best for the kids, and she has been a great addition to the OMS staff."

OMS National Honor Society member, **Abby White**, said the students came up with the idea to fundraise to help with Allen's health care costs because they wanted to support her.

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## OHS celebrates 'Reset. Refresh. Renew.' Court-mat



Dave MacLean, OHS assistant principal, and Angie Sallee, OHS librarian and StuCo sponsor, brace themselves as ice water is poured on them during Court-Mat festivities.

By Lilly Malizzi

Reset. Refresh. Renew. This unique Court-Mat theme was chosen as a collaborative effort among the OHS Student Council executive board members. They wanted a theme that signified a fresh start in 2021 putting 2020 in the past.

The theme came about when members were brainstorming possible word choices.

**Angie Sallee**, sponsor, said there was a moment of "serendipity" when **Natalie Marble**, StuCo recording secretary, repeated three of the words together, and that was when the theme "Reset. Refresh. Renew." came to be.

"We chose the theme to encourage students to clear their minds and prepare themselves for the next chapter," Marble said.

Sallee said they wanted a theme that emphasized self-care and would be inspirational in a way that varied from traditional themes.

Odessa High School celebrated Court-Mat January 18-23 with multiple activities organized around the chosen theme. **Brett Duncan** and **Alexa Muenstermann**, seniors, were crowned King and Queen, and **Clay Fox**, junior, and **Dallas Mays**, sophomore, were crowned prince and princess during halftime of the varsity boys-basketball game.

Other royalty candidates were: **Donovan Aardema Faigh**, **Houston Eagan**, **Dylan Lamert**, **Peyton Hagerty**, **Olivia Hawk** and **Kennedy Kleoppel**, senior candidates; and **Aaron Kolie** and **Madi Robinette**, freshmen; **Zack Miller**, sophomore; and **Ryann Beard**, junior.

Varsity boys basketball game ended in a loss against fourth-ranked Center, but **Doug Burnett**, coach, said the team played hard to the last point.

"Playing hard is only half the battle," Burnett said. "They need to See **COURTMAT**, page 4

## Rachel Hedrick, OHS junior, pursues Industrial Welding certification

By Taelor Horne

**Rachel Hedrick**, Odessa High School junior, is currently in her first year of the Industrial Welding program offered at Lex La-Ray Technical Center in Lexington. She is one of approximately 50 OHS students who are chosen each year to participate in the various programs offered.

Programs offer many advantages to students who might not want to go to a four-year university. They can earn high school credits while receiving free hands-on technical training and earning industry-recognized certifications to make themselves employable.

Hedrick is preparing for a future career and also having fun holding her own in this male-dominated industry.

"It was satisfying, interesting and powerful," Hedrick said about her first time welding.

**Ashley Ray**, OHS counselor, said the push in education is to see students pursue higher education training, but recently there has been a shift back toward promoting the trade industry.

"I am glad to see that these industries are getting the recognition that they deserve," Ray said, "because they are an excellent opportunity for our students to gain a high-paying job without putting themselves in significant debt to get there."

To be accepted, students must go through an application and interview process. Ray said the interview process allows them to see the students beyond general measures.

"We are looking for students who have a career path that is consistent with the Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and would strongly benefit from the hand-on learning experience," Ray said.

While attending the technical school, students earn three practical art credits the first year, one math credit and one English credit the second year. Earning high school credit while attending the technical school allows students to only attend OHS the



**Rachel Hedrick, OHS junior, enjoys the Industrial Welding class offered at Lex La-Ray Technical Center in Lexington.**

second half of the day, while still earning enough credits to graduate on time.

Students also receive between \$3000 to \$5000 worth of training by the end of the two-year programs, and it is free to students because the school district covers tuition and transportation. Students are only responsible for miscellaneous fees and must purchase some class supplies.

Finally, attendees earn industry-recognized certifications when they graduate, allowing them to enter the workforce. Hedrick plans to use those certifications and the skills she is learning to pursue a career in welding. She wants to work in a shop for a couple of years after she graduates to fine tune her skills and gain more experience. Then, Hedrick plans to join the union or work as a pipeliner.

Hedrick also said going on a field trip to Lex La-Ray her sophomore year played a big role for her in deciding to attend. Each year, all sophomores have an opportunity to tour Lex La-Ray and see what is offered.

"Welding was one of the classes that caught my eye," Hedrick said.

Hedrick also said **Karma Smith**, a 2020 graduate from OHS and the Lex La-Ray Industrial Welding program, also influenced her decision to pursue welding.

Hedrick said she loves the welding program but admits there were some challenges and fears for her to overcome when decid-

ing to pursue the predominantly male occupation. Hedrick is the only female in her class, and she was worried about being able to build relationships with her classmates and how they would treat her.

"It was hard and terrifying in the beginning because none of the guys would really talk to me," Hedrick said. "Once I showed my sense of humor, it was all over from there, and there weren't any problems. The guys treat me as one of their best friends. I can rely on them to have my back."

She appreciates that the boys provide her "comedic relief." She also appreciates the lack of drama and being able to "leave all your emotions at the door."

Hedrick said she believes she will be able to compete with males in the workforce even though she can't match them in physical strength. She said while she is lacking in physical strength, her strengths such as being detail-oriented and reliable, will help.

Hedrick's Industrial Welding teacher, **Nathan Day**, also notices her strengths.

"She is a hard worker and a very good welder," Day said. "She has no problems jumping in and getting work done."

In addition to Industrial Welding, other Lex La-Ray programs include Automotive Technology, Building Trades, Collision Repair Technology, Computer Maintenance and Networking, Culinary Arts, Early Childhood Professions and Health Occupations.

## Staff spotlight

This month's featured reporter is **Taelor Horne**, OHS sophomore. She joined Journalism this year to help improve her writing skills and because she wants to help make the yearbooks her junior and senior year. Journalism I (newspaper) is a prerequisite for Journalism II and III (yearbook).

Horne has been in the Odessa R7 School District since kindergarten. Her father, **Josh Horne**, and **Arin Saulters**, her older sister, both graduated from Odessa High School. The three of them have had several of the same teachers, including **Kris Poisal**, Journalism teacher.

January was a big month for Horne because she celebrated her sixteenth birthday on January 25, passed her drivers test and enjoyed spending time with her family. January was also exciting for Horne because she became an aunt on January 26 when Saulters had her first child, **Maverick**. Maverick increased their family to four including Saulters' husband, **James**, and step-son, **Brayden**.

Horne said she is glad to come from a loving family, and is especially close with her dad. She is a self-proclaimed "daddy's girl." They have shared many memorable experiences. One was taking a "minnow shot" together at a restaurant at the Lake of the Ozarks. She drank a live minnow in a small glass of lemonade. Horne said it was a weird concept to think about, but it was hard to tell there was even something in it. They did it twice because her mom, **Maria**, was unable to get a video the first time.

Another memorable moment was when they met one of their favorite NASCAR drivers, **Kurt Busch**, at Kansas Speedway. Hornes father has enjoyed sharing his love of racing with her over the years. They have spent many nights as a family at local dirt tracks. The two of them are anticipating the reopening of the I-70 Speedway in Odessa as Hornes' father visited the track regularly before it closed down in 2008.

In addition to racing, Horne loves



**Taelor Horne**

playing sports. She has played soccer since she was five years old and has played softball since she was twelve. She is on the OHS soccer and softball teams, but she said softball takes up the majority of her time and is her favorite.

Horne's mother has been one of her biggest supporters. Horne said her mom is the one who takes her to and from her practices. She appreciates that her parents have attended almost all of her games and performances over the years.

When Horne isn't busy with school or sports, she enjoys spending time with her boyfriend, **James Shelton**, who is a senior at OHS. They have dated for a little over a year and enjoy watching Chiefs games and laughing at Tik Toks.

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## OMS girls basketball teams complete nearly perfect season

By Peyton Gross

OMS girls basketball A team ended the season 8-1, and the B team went 10-0. Combined, the teams went 18-1, which **Donald Aulbert**, coach, said was the best any group has done while he has been coaching at OMS.

Aulbert said he believed that next year's seventh-graders would help his team continue its push forward in the conference. He said he credits the OMS sports expansion and "very talented" grade levels with the team's success. By the end of the season, the A team started two seventh-graders and three eighth-graders.

"Looking to next year," Aulbert said, "we will bring back a ton of seventh grade talent and hope that we have some key sixth grade additions."

Aulbert said dropping a game against Pleasant Hill gave the girls the added drive they needed.

"Complacency has no place in athletics," Aulbert said. "Without that loss, maybe we aren't as focused as we were to finish out the season undefeated after that. They fought every day in practice to get better."

"It is tough to have enough depth to go 18 to 20 deep in one grade level against other teams' best players of seventh and eighth-graders," Aulbert said. "Being able to mix our players and put them in a position to be successful."

This team is unlike any other he has had, Aulbert said. No one is dominant, and they work well together.

"On any given day, I have a different player as the MVP," Aulbert said.

**Rylee Adams**, eighth-grader, was a constant post presence throughout the season. If she caught the ball on the block, she would usually put the ball in the basket.

"She is lethal when our guards can get her the ball on the block," Aulbert said.

**Keely Byrd**, seventh grade point guard, handled pressure well, according to Aulbert. If there was a player open, she would find her.

"She also has a good jump shot," Aulbert said, "and has the ability to create her own shot."

He said the team plays excellent defense and can play many different styles of basketball. Their ability to learn quickly makes them stand out, as well.

"They can take what I have asked them to do and be successful with it very quickly," Aulbert said. "If we need to speed teams up or slow them down, we can do either one."

As Aulbert learned about his team, he was able to change their strategy to fit their strengths.

"We became a much better team at choosing when to attack and when to slow down and set a play up," Aulbert said.

The girls were also able to

reduce their turnovers from around 30 per game to 10, giving them more shots offensively.

The teams' only loss was December 10 against Pleasant Hill, who allowed seventh-graders to play during the 2019-20 season. However, they were also athletic, tall, quick and good players. In fact, Aulbert credited them with having the two best players on the court.

"They did the little things all game long," Aulbert said, "which pushed us away pretty quickly, as we had a tough time scoring in the first half."

The team did not get a chance for a rematch because the January 14 game was canceled when Pleasant Hill's A team was quarantined. Aulbert believed the game would have gone in Odessa's favor because the girls played a completely different style of basketball later in the season.

The most exciting game, according to Aulbert, was against Warrensburg at home. The A team got behind 16-2 by the second quarter, but they were able to close the gap to 30-18 with only 5:09 left in the game. The Bulldogs were able to get the Tigers best player to foul out and went on a 17-5 scoring run to tie the game at 35 and go into overtime. The girls dominated in overtime to win 47-37.

"They had to grind this game out and give it everything they had to get it into overtime," Aulbert said. "Once there, they put Warrensburg away."

The pandemic had an affect on the season as well. The team had to practice virtually for a period of time. The MRVC tournament was cut short, as well. When the team could practice in person, they had to spread out and wear masks "Nothing could make me prouder than how the girls bonded together and played for one another," Aulbert said.

## Boys basketball C team members learn roles



**Drew Sallee**, freshman, makes a three-point shot against **William Crisman**.

By Danika Dutel

Odessa High School boys basketball C team ended 2-10 after the season was cut short due to inclement weather. The season was set to end on February 18 at Warrensburg. The Bulldogs were going to be gunning for the Tigers because their last matchup on January 20 ended in a 33-38 loss, so they were looking for the win. Unfortunately, the team didn't get a chance to even the score.

The team recently took on the Marshall Owls on February 3 at home. The Bulldogs had a 10-point lead going into halftime. **Eric Smith**, coach, said his team had a "very hot start" to the game. The gap closed with around four minutes left in the game, and then Marshall came back to take the lead. The last half of the fourth quarter went back and forth with multiple lead changes.

With less than one minute left on the clock, the Bulldogs got the ball with a tie game. Smith called a timeout with 23 seconds remaining. **Drew Sallee**, freshman, made a game-winning shot from the three-point line as the buzzer sounded. The 41-38 victory was the team's second win of the season.

"I was just thinking about trying to win the game for my team," Sallee said. "After the shot, I didn't realize what I had done yet."

Despite their disappointing record, the team is learning im-

portant lessons and gaining skills, according to Smith. Smith teaches business at OHS and is also an assistant baseball coach.

Those lessons started with the team's first game against Richmond when the team was down a few players due to injury and illness. They lost 38-55, but they came back a few weeks later to play Richmond's JV team. They were down by one point at the start of the fourth quarter, when things started to fall apart, resulting in a 14-point loss.

"I feel our performance showed a lot of growth, and that game stands out to me the most because I feel like we really had a chance to beat them," Smith said. "If we had all our players, I'm sure we actually would have."

Smith said the game showed the players were starting to understand their roles and how they impact the team's performance, based on their effort and decisions.

The team also showed growth against St. Michael's. They first played them on January 4 and lost 49-71, but when they had a rematch on January 12, they closed the gap to 40-44.

"Even though St. Michael's was a tough opponent, they turned around and measured up to them," Smith said. "It really showed how much they've grown as a team."

Smith's outlook for the season is  
See **BOYS**, page 4



# Fifth-graders participate in drug prevention program

By Avery Slusher

Fifth-graders at Odessa Upper Elementary were recently shocked by the statistics shared with them regarding the dangers of tobacco use. More than 400,000 deaths per year are associated with the use of tobacco, even more deaths than are linked to alcohol use.

The students are participating in the DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program. The program goals are to teach students good decision-making skills and to help them lead safe and healthy lifestyles. Students began the 10 week program the week of January 12 and ended in March.

"The DARE program is extraordinary," **Rebekah Hagerty**, fifth grade teacher, said, "and gives students a look at real-life situations that they may encounter as they get older."

The "Keepin' it REAL" curriculum has been updated and focuses on students' decisions as well as the dangers of drugs, and according to an online article in Scientific American, the program is more effective.

**Greg Daniel**, Odessa R-7 School District Resource Officer, teaches the curriculum. He attended a training to become certified and said he enjoys talking to students about the health effects and consequences of their choices through the scenarios provided in the curriculum.

"You can see the shock on their faces," Daniel said. "This is the age where kids start to experiment with different things."

Daniel works with students once a week for 45 minutes. The course is usually taught first semester, but Hagerty said it was moved to second semester this year due to the pandemic.

Topics include decision making, risky situations, safe choices, resistance strategies, evaluating decisions, communication, bullying and networking.

Though DARE is not mandatory, it is highly encouraged for all fifth grade students and permission slips are sent home with all students. No grades are taken for the lessons, but

students can enter an essay contest after participating in the program and have a chance to win prizes.

Daniel has also worked with the Lafayette County Sheriff's office and has performed other road patrol duties. He said when the Sheriff's department asked him to become a School Resource Officer, he couldn't turn down the opportunity. He loves interacting with the students on a daily basis. His duties also include providing security and safety for all students and staff in the district and working closely with the administration.

## C team prepares for next season

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hopeful as his team nears conference play. "We are playing with a lot of effort," Smith said, "and finally getting to the point where we're playing really hard defense for full court, finishing around the basket well, making smart decisions and treating the basketball like it matters."

**Christian Fite**, sophomore, stands out to Smith because of his work ethic.

"He plays a really hard defense," Smith said. "He was somebody we weren't quite sure what to expect from whenever the season started,



**Greg Daniel, Odessa R-7 School Resource Officer, teaches the national DARE program to fifth-graders at Odessa Upper Elementary.**

but he has really shown a lot of maturity and showed that he can play with max effort."

In addition to focusing on effort, the team works on fundamentals in practice to become more consistent.

The pandemic has impacted the team throughout the season because they had to get used to talking and running with masks. Smith wants to encourage middle school students to go out for high school basketball next year.

"Hopefully we'll be able to move our program in the right direction," Smith said.

# OMS algebra teacher diagnosed with rare disease

**ALLEN** from page 1

The honor society held a spirit week for Allen where students could pay \$1 each day to participate. They also held a coin drive where the grade levels competed to raise the most money and receive a treat. Finally, they sold tickets for a chance to give a teacher a pie in the face.

"The fundraiser that raised the most money was the coin drive because it was the easiest, and all the grade levels were super competitive," White said.

"I was grateful when I found out

the students were fundraising for me, but I was embarrassed because I usually don't like asking for help," Allen said.

Allen and her husband have three step-children and three adopted children, and they currently foster children as well. The children range in ages from 9 to 20.

This is Allen's second year teaching at OMS. She taught sixth and seventh grade math in Excelsior Springs for four years before coming to OMS.

# OHS celebrates Court-Mat

**COURTMAT** from page 1

learn to value the ball more when it is in their possession."

OHS Winter Guard members performed their show during half-time. They performed in gold and black costumes on a vibrant green mat, designed to look like a garden path. "The show expresses being joyful and free and involves a lot of dancing," **Amanda Rickey**, sophomore, said. "I have a solo at the end. It is a golden flag solo, and I am the last one standing."

Other Winter Guard members are **Jacob Arms, Abigail Gibson, Kaela Uhrlaub** and **Makayla Wirsig**.

Boys varsity wrestlers competed in the Kearney Duals on January 23 for Court-Mat. **Kirk Gross**, coach, said he was pleased with the team's performance because they were "within striking distance" on all of the matches, even though they did not have a full team due to COVID-19 quarantines.

**Gavin Gross, Bryce Palmer** and **Jake Evinger**, seniors, provide leadership for the team both on and off the mat. G. Gross said their goal for the season is to win at districts, sectionals and state. He thinks having team spirit is a

big part of their success, mentioning that Palmer stands out because of his school spirit.

Students and staff enjoyed participating in Court-Mat Spirit Week as well. Monday, a virtual day for students, was dedicated to completing acts of kindness and service projects. Some examples included doing extra chores, checking in with friends and even leaving a \$20 tip. Tuesday and Thursday students wore their favorite outfits, and Wednesday and Friday students dressed like someone they admired.

Another activity for the week that centered around the Court-Mat theme was having students and staff choose a One Word goal for 2021. The words were written on sticky notes and then added to a bulletin board. Examples included active, joyful and helpful. Entire building activities, like the One Word, took the place of an all-school assembly due to the pandemic.

Finally, OHS StuCo held a fundraiser during Court-Mat week to raise money for Special Olympics. The fundraiser was a version of the Polar Plunge and involved dumping coolers full of ice water on the volunteers who had the most votes by way of donations.

## Horne is excited to join Yearbook Staff

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Doing well in school is important to Horne, and she works to maintain straight As and puts school work before anything else. She said that even though she doesn't always feel like coming to

school, she knows it is important and her friends make it worth the effort. Horne is looking forward to sophomore year and hopefully "getting back to some normalcy." She said she "just wants the pandemic to go away"



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