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THE GROWLER

Odessa High School, Odessa, Missouri

Donkey basketball fund-raiser is a big hit



Leah Wagner, senior, tries to get through Zach Meler's and Annie Austin's defense in the OHS donkey basketball game. Seniors defeated the teachers 10-8.

By Brittany Affolter

November 6 the OHS gymnasium looked more like a barnyard than a gym as donkeys scrambled, bucked, kicked, sat and balked as their riders struggled to maintain control. This was the scene as the seniors hosted Dairyland Donkey Basketball games to help fund Project Grad.

Tickets were \$10 in advance or \$15 at the door, and the event raised more than \$2000. Beth Wagner, McQuerry Literacy Intervention Specialist, was in charge of the fundraiser because her daughter, Leah, is a senior.

Players had to attend a rules meeting before they could participate in the games. In a rules meeting before the games, they learned they could only pass and try to score while mounted on the donkeys. Players also had to wear tennis shoes, long pants and helmets. Players could help each other get on and off the donkeys, and the donkeys could be lead or pulled but needed to be treated kindly. Games were eight-minute

halves with a running clock.

Three games were played. The first game featured seniors versus the Odessa faculty. The second game was seniors against the Odessa "Stars, or notable community members. The final championship game pitted the winners of the first two games against each other.

As the Odessa Faculty took the floor to challenge the Senior Team 1, Logan Seals' donkey started to scatter manure everywhere. Seals, OHS Technology Director, was relieved when Weston Dyer, sophomore, and Justus Quick, freshman, jumped into action as the "poop patrol." Dyer and Quick, FFA members were up for the challenge.

Dyer lives on a farm and raises red angus cattle, so, when Bill Angel, FFA adviser, asked for a volunteer, he was in.

"I enjoyed watching people fall off and try to get back on the donkeys," Dyer said. "I didn't mind cleaning up after the donkeys because I didn't have anything else to do, and I do stuff like that at home."

As the game got rolling, Trevor Sims made the first

shot, bringing the score to 2-0 seniors. Shortly after Sims' score, Cade Adams followed up with another good shot for the seniors. Seniors were ahead 4-0 at halftime.

In the second half, Seals opened up with a three-point shot, closing the gap to 4-3. Adams fought back, scoring another shot and bringing the score to 6-3. Eric Smith, OHS business teacher, scored a three-pointer to tie the score 6-6.

Annie Austin, OHS math teacher, was one of many players to fall off of a donkey during the games. Destiny Dodge, senior, was subbed into the game and tried to get onto her donkey, but quickly found out it was more difficult than she thought.

As Dodge was on the floor, Leah Wagner, senior, tried to help her back up. Little did the girls know, Dodge would get bucked off again and end up back where she started.

"I think I did pretty solid on not being anywhere near the ball because I was always on the floor," Dodge said.

Senior Team 1 defeated the Faculty team 10-8.

In the second game between Senior Team 2 and the Odessa Stars, Cole Keedwell, senior, scored in the first 20 seconds of the game. Shayne Lewis, senior, also scored bringing the score to 4-0.

"The donkeys were extremely stubborn," said Lewis. "You had to try to shoot while they were walking off or bucking, so it was difficult." Lewis, an avid horseback rider said the donkeys were harder to stay on than a horse. "You just slip off because there isn't anything to hold onto."

See **DONKEY**, page 3

OHS drama department performs *Mamma Mia!*



Lauryn Roncelli, senior, Olivia Hawk, junior, and Reagan Medlock, freshman, perform during the song Super Trooper in the OHS musical, *Mamma Mia!*

By Ashley Overcast

OHS Drama Department performed the musical *Mamma Mia!* at 7 p.m. on November 21 through 23 in the OHS auditorium. Olivia Hawk, junior, played Donna Sheridan and Alexa Muenstermann, junior, played Sophie Sheridan, the lead roles. Tickets were \$5 in advance or \$6 at the door.

Connor Bush, OHS drama teacher, directed the show; Harry Hamblin, OHS choir teacher, directed the music; and Aydan McMahon, junior, was the assistant director.

Other performers were: Brayden Holt, freshman, as Sam Carmichael, Trevor Ramsey, senior, as Harry Bright, Camden Lanciaux, senior, as Bill Anderson and Keiton Johnson, senior, as Sky.

"This year, I felt like we were really a family," Hawk said. "Before every show, we would get in a circle and pray. We would also hop three times and tell each other to 'break a leg'. It was such a family atmosphere."

Mamma Mia! is a story about a mother, Donna, from the Greek Islands who is preparing for her daughter, Sophie's, wedding with a couple of lifelong friends. As her mother is preparing for the wedding, Sophie secretly invites three men (Sam, Harry and Bill) from her mom's past in hopes of finding her real father to walk her down the aisle on her wedding day.

However, at the last minute, Sophie backs out of the wedding, but her mom ends up marrying Sam. Even though Sophie never finds out who her real dad is, all three men decide to act as her father together.

Bush and Hamblin's classes had the deciding vote in what musical was chosen this year, and they liked *Mamma Mia!* for several reasons.

"We selected this musical for the large cast and crew opportunities that are showcased," Bush said. "The rights for the show were just released in 2018 See **MUSICAL**, page 3

Eric Smith brings finance experience to OHS

By Kaleigh Snow

Eric Smith, OHS personal finance teacher, joined the Odessa school district for the 2019-20 school year beginning both his teaching and coaching careers. Although he is new to teaching, he is not new to the business field or to sports and enjoys sharing his knowledge with students.

He first worked in the retirement business and said he brings many parts of his previous job to OHS. However, he soon figured out that being a broker wasn't for him.

Smith said there were several parts of being a broker which he enjoyed, and he said he appreciates that he left behind the parts he didn't like.

"I loved educating people about their overall financial stability and strategies for the future," Smith said, "and teaching gives me a platform to do that."

"I like that he comes from a background of business and uses practical knowledge

to teach his students," Brad Briscoe, OHS principal, said. "He has an engaging personality, and he does a good job of building relationships with his kids."

Smith grew up in Springfield and attended Springfield Catholic High School where he played baseball, basketball and football. He attended Avila University for three years on a baseball scholarship before transferring to William Jewell College where he majored in business administration.

"I would say, when I went into college, my path was a little different from other teachers," Smith said. "I wanted to teach and coach, but my plans got kind of derailed when I transferred. So, I went to school for five years."

However, Smith, decided late is better than never, and he is enjoying teaching. He said he enjoys using humor in the classroom and creating relationships with his students as he works to establish a posi-

tive learning environment.

"I love that with this job I can look someone in the eye and say that regardless of what they do when they cross the stage and turn the tassel, my class is going to be relevant," Smith said.

Smith is also an assistant coach for baseball and basketball. He enjoys coaching and would like to make a positive difference in his players' lives like many of his coaches did for him.

"I've had some coaches along the way who have really shaped who I want to be," Smith said. "Also my dad, who always checks up on me, but I would say my coaches really motivated me to become a coach."

Smith said he enjoys the challenges of coaching and helping players develop their skills.

"I like taking students who may have not necessarily played the sport before and teaching them the fundamentals, so they can compete with



Eric Smith, OHS personal finance teacher, prepares for class.

others who have played a lot longer," Smith said.

Doug Burnett, OHS head boys basketball coach and algebra teacher, said he enjoys coaching alongside Smith.

"He brings a lot of energy and is very detail oriented," Burnett said.

Smith lives in Kansas City but said he enjoys the small-town atmosphere of Odessa.

"Everyone here (in Odessa) is involved with the school, and it is just a great community," Smith said.

After changing careers, Smith is finding out that teaching and coaching doesn't leave much free time, but he enjoys attending sporting events, announcing and playing sports.

"With my average four minutes of free time I get per month, I love to do anything sport," Smith joked. "This summer I plan on seeing how many golf balls I can lose," Smith said, "as well as coaching multiple summer baseball teams from nine-year-olds to college."

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OHS senior strikes it rich on her birthday



Jentri Oetinger, senior, won \$1000 on her first lottery ticket purchase on her eighteenth birthday.

By Nikole Smith and Cali Meierarend

Achieving milestones is a part of growing up, and by the time students reach high school, they have reached many. For example, turning 13 and officially being a teenager;

turning 16 and being able to drive; and turning 18 and being considered an adult.

Jentri Oetinger, OHS senior, recently enjoyed one of the privileges of turning 18 on October 30 by purchasing her first lottery ticket. The morning of her birthday, she bought the lottery ticket at Casey's as a joke before school. Later that morning, Oetinger was scratching her lottery ticket in the band room when she found out she won \$1000.

"I was really surprised and shocked because I never have good luck with these types of things," Oetinger said. "It was very exciting."

Oetinger has spent some of her money so far. Her mom, Kasha, who teaches third grade at OUE, took her to the musical Dear Evan Hansen in Saint Louis the Sunday after her birthday, and she bought

a vinyl of the songs. She also plans to spend some of her money on her band trip to Orlando, Florida.

"The trip itself is \$1000, and I only have about \$300 of it paid off," Oetinger said.

Birthdays are about traditions as well, and in Oetinger's family, they enjoy eating birthday cake for breakfast as a fun start to the day.

"I had yellow cake with chocolate frosting. It is my favorite," Oetinger said.

Later in the day, her older sister, Kayla, took her to claim her cash prize in Independence and took her to the mall to shop and see the movie, *Joker*.

Oetinger, who is new to OHS, is enjoying getting involved. She transferred to OHS after her father, Jon, accepted the position of superintendent for the school district. She partic-

ipates in speech and debate, theater, band, and is a member of National Honor Society and the Scholar Bowl team. She enjoys drawing and painting in her free time, as well.

"I really enjoy being in Odessa," Oetinger said. "I like that it's a little bigger than my old town because it has a few more opportunities. It still has that old-town kind of feel, and I really like the band because it's a lot bigger than my old one."

Although she enjoys living in Odessa and going to OHS, Oetinger is looking forward to yet another milestone. She is excited to graduate and go to college where her good luck will hopefully follow her.

"After I graduate, I want to continue my education at Missouri State University," Oetinger said. "I want to pursue a degree in the arts, but I'm not sure which one yet."

OHS musical cast & crew push through challenges



Keiton Johnson, senior, and Alexa Muenstermann, junior, perform in the OHS musical *Mamma Mia!*, as Sophia and Sky, during the song, "Lay All Your Love on Me."

MUSICAL from 1 and we were excited to produce a show that was recently allowed to be produced by high schools. We wanted the kids to have a fun, high-energy show that they would have a blast working on."

According to Hamblin, there were a lot of challenges in putting this production together. He said that ABBA's music is fun but difficult to get all of the different harmony parts coordinated. However, he felt it was worth the effort.

"The songs are very smartly constructed, but also musically sophisticated," Hamblin said. "There are many parts that we have to cover, all while dancing. I have loved this music for a very long time, since my mother likes and listens to ABBA. So, doing this show has been a joy for me to work on."

For this performance, the backstage crew was key, according to Bush. There were 27 performers on stage and 20 backstage members.

Bush said in addition to the cast, crew and directors, several other people helped make the performance a success. He said his drama classes built the sets, and the OHS secretaries helped sell tickets. He said he also appreciated the support of the school administrators, Brad Briscoe, principal, Dave McLean, assistant

principal, and Mat Vleisides, activities director.

"My favorite part is how well our kids can act and sing," Vleisides said, after watching the performance. "That is not easy, and we have so many that do it so well. That goes for those involved in prop design, sound and lights too. Those parts of the performance were fantastic."

Bush said school performances are great educational tools and help strengthen students' ability to multitask and solve problems. He said the musical was a challenge to pull together because the cast is so involved in other activities that he never had a practice with everyone present at the same time.

"I enjoyed watching all of the hard work from the last two months come together and become a beautiful show," Bush said.

Mamma Mia is the ninth-longest running Broadway musical and is the longest-running Broadway "Jukebox" musical. The musical opened on Broadway at the Winter Garden Theatre on October 18, 2001 and ran eight shows a week until September 12, 2015. *Mamma Mia!* played 5,773 performances on Broadway before closing. The touring company of *Mamma Mia!* has played in more than 50 countries on six continents.

OHS Senior Team wins donkey basketball game



Brian Young, school board president, and Shayne Lewis, senior, try to get open for a pass.

DONKEY from 1 Before the halftime buzzer, Dawson Gittinger, senior, missed a shot. However, later in the game, he scored to help his team pull away from the Stars after his donkey eventually agreed to move.

In the second half, Brandon Badgley, Odessa Stars, scored all of the team's eight points. The team's strategy was to stage him and his donkey under the basket where they fed him the ball. With a minute left in the game, it was 8-8. Badgley missed a shot allowing the seniors to get the ball, drive down, shoot and score to win the game 10-8. Badgley and his wife, Audrey, who also played for the Stars, own Stormy Acres Trading Co.

"It was pretty nip and tuck," Chris Doering, OMS assistant principal, who played for the Stars, said. "I enjoyed playing even though the donkeys were 'stubborn' as they say."

"My favorite part was watching Gary VanLanker go 0-20

with his shots," Donald Aulbert, OMS history teacher, said about watching the game from the stands. VanLanker, Odessa Stars player, is the youth pastor at Odessa Calvary Baptist Church.

"I was physically there, but my skill was definitely not," VanLanker said. "At least I made a new friend while I was playing. I called him White Lightning," VanLanker joked about the donkey that wouldn't move.

For the final game, both senior teams moved onto the championship game and faced off in the middle of the gym. Keedwell was the first to grab the ball for Senior Team 2. He raced down the court toward the basket with Hayden Dowell, Senior Team 1, trying to mount his donkey to try and stop him.

However, Dowell's donkey was not in on the play and bucked him high into the air with Dowell ending up on his back on the gym floor.

Cade Adams scored later in the game helping Senior Team 1 earn two more points. Trevor Sims also made a few shots for Senior Team 1, however, they could not stop Keedwell as he continued to score, earning all of his team's 12 points.

"When I was younger, my mom had me ride, and I got thrown off of horses all the time," Keedwell said. "So, when the donkey threw me off, it didn't bother me. I just kept getting up and trying to score."

Keedwell said he was too scared to get off his donkey, so he relied on Lewis and Nevaeh Begeman to get on and off their donkeys and feed him the ball.

"I couldn't have scored without them because my donkey was hard to get on," Keedwell said.

The teams were tied 10-10 late in the game when Keedwell got the ball. With only seconds left, he shot at the buzzer, and they won the game 12-10.

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OUE participates in Health Moves Minds program

By Makenzie Harget

OUE students are participating in the Health Moves Minds program, a service learning program, created by SHAPE America (The Society of Health and Physical Educators). The program helps raise money for schools and provides programs for K-12 physical education classes. In service learning, students help others in the school, community and world.

Coach Bieri, OUE physical education teacher said, children don't get enough exercise and have problems with anxiety, depression and mental health issues. She believes that understanding these challenges, promoting an active school environment, and teaching children how to cope with stress, bullying and other societal pressures can make all the difference in a child's life.

"Physical Education promotes healthy growth and development," Bieri said. "It helps build a healthier body composition, stronger bones and muscles."

During the Health Moves Minds program on November 14, students participated in different activities to promote keeping the body and state of mind balanced. One of the activities was called "Musical Spots and Respectful Listening."

During the activity, students moved around the gym while music played. Once the music stopped, students were told to find a partner who had the same colored shirt they had. Partners greeted each other and then got into a push-up position facing each other with a hacky sack between them.

Next, they passed the hacky

sack back and forth for about 15 seconds. The student who ended up with the hacky sack was called the "apple" and the student without the hacky sack was called the "banana." Then, they practiced listening skills by answering questions with the "apple" students being the talkers and the "banana" students being the listeners.

Students also raised money in-person and online as part of the program. The funds can be used in different ways. The first option is for half of the money raised to go toward the school. In the second option, a quarter of the money goes toward the school while another quarter goes toward an organization or charity of choice. For both choices, the remaining half of the funds raised helps support health and physical education pro-

grams and advocacy at the local, state and national levels.

Last year, as one of the 22 pilot schools, Bieri chose the second option and gave a quarter of the money to the Odessa Police Department to help fund their dog program.

"This year," Bieri said, "I wanted to focus on things we need at the school like new PE and recess equipment and other learning tools."

Students earned prizes for raising money for the program. The overall top online fundraising student, Breck Green, fourth-grader, became the PE teacher for a day. Green was also the top overall fundraiser, so he got to have the gym named after him for the rest of the school year. The top fundraisers per class were Camden Rider, third-grader, Green, and Kyla Stokes, fifth-grader. Rider raised

\$118, Green raised \$354, and Stokes raised \$106. The three attended a free lunch with Bieri and Buffie McConville, OUE principal, at the Odessa Creamery.

Students who collected \$10 had their picture posted on the "Be the I in Kind" wall. For registering online and raising \$25, they received a t-shirt. If the school reaches their goal of raising \$5500, then Bieri and McConville will spend the night at OUE. Currently, they are only \$820 away from that goal.

Bieri graduated from The University of Central Missouri in 1999 with a bachelor's degree in physical education. She also received her master's degree from Lindenwood in Curriculum and Instruction. Bieri is also a former OHS girls PE and weights teacher and assistant volleyball and basketball coach.



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