



January 2021

THE GROWLER

Odessa High School, Odessa, Missouri

Students adapt to virtual learning

By Peyton Gross & Danika Dutel

Classes at OHS started to evolve last spring when the school was shut down due to COVID-19 and everything that went along with the pandemic. Teachers and students were suddenly thrust into a virtual platform that seemed unfamiliar and scary to many.

However, out of the chaos that began 2020, positive and lasting changes are continuing to emerge. One such change is the option for students to go entirely virtual. While students previously had online options, it wasn't to the extent offered for the 20-21 school year. Ninety-four OHS students, approximately 20 percent of the student body, have chosen to be entirely virtual for the first semester and now must decide if they will continue or return to a seated classroom.

To go virtual, parents had to choose that option when enrolling their student for the 20-21 school year. The school did allow a couple of weeks after school started for students to switch, if needed.

"Allowing students to go virtual is important because it allows everyone the chance to continue with their education, regardless of their family's needs," **Sara Corder**, OHS attendance secretary, said.

Corder is in charge of checking out Chromebooks to OHS students and hotspots for the district. The district is providing hotspots and Chromebooks to any virtual student who does not have access to the devices at home.

"We currently have around 60 Chromebooks checked out at the high school alone," Corder said.



Trenton Elliott, virtual senior, works on an online German I assignment. Elliott said he is remaining virtual because the virus is still so active and because he enjoys virtual learning over seated learning.

Emma Gutierrez, virtual sophomore, said she is planning on staying virtual next semester. She chose to go virtual this year because her family is worried about her and others catching the virus.

"I can get my work done whenever and wherever," Gutierrez said. "It's nice to be able to do my work in the comfort of my home and at my own pace."

Gutierrez said that virtual learning does have some disadvantages, though.

"While doing virtual learning is convenient, it can also be difficult," Gutierrez said. "I personally learn better in a hands-on environment where I can easily access a teacher for help."

Trenton Elliott, virtual senior, said he made the choice to go virtual because he thought it would be easier and safer.

"Virtual learning is great," Elliott said. "I get to decide how and when I learn."

Elliott said that virtual learning can be difficult as well because the assignments don't always have due dates.

"It is hard to get motivated to do the work, especially calculus," Elliott said.

Elliott said he is remaining virtual because the virus is still so active and because he enjoys virtual learning over seated learning.

On the other hand, **Kaitlyn Fisher**, virtual sophomore, said she plans on coming back to school in January because she feels the advantages of virtual learning for her are slim. Fisher chose to go virtual because her father has health concerns that she is worried about.

See **VIRTUAL**, page 4

Third-graders organize fundraiser for koalas



Odessa Upper Elementary Koala Crew: Collins Maisch, Aylee Feagan, Kenisyn Burks, Harper Ray and Cora Shippy.

By Avery Slusher

Aylee Feagan, third-grader, recently read a book about koalas that was in the OUE library. She was shocked when learning that people have caused them to be endangered by burning their habitat and the leaves they eat, so she decided to get her friends involved and do something about it.

"Koalas are good animals, and I like the way they act," Aylee said.

Aylee enlisted the help of **Harper Ray, Kenisyn Burks, Cora Shippy** and **Collins Maisch**, also third-graders in **Robin Smith's** class, and The Koala Crew began.

The girls were concerned, so they came up with an idea on their own to help raise money for the cause. They brought the idea to their teacher who provided the help they needed to put their plan into action.

The girls decided to put three donation buckets around the school in hopes that their fellow classmates would want to help, too. The buckets were

located in the office, the library and their classroom. They also made posters to hang up around the school and made morning announcements.

"When the students came to me with such interest and excitement, I knew I had to help them with their project," Smith said.

Smith said she sent the girls to **Chris Doering**, principal, and he set the guidelines and the girls "took off".

"The girls are all hard workers, each with such giving hearts," Smith said. "I am very proud of them. They are making the choice to 'be the good and make a difference'."

The girls each gave speeches the week of October 19 with the morning announcements. Harper started her morning speech out with a catchy phrase to get her point across to other students in the school.

"OK, let's talk about koalas and why they are in danger," Harper said.

Harper went on to say, "Peo-

See **KOALA**, page 4

Brad Begemann, OHS graduate, assumes OMS administrative duties

By Lilly Malizzi

Brad Begemann, 2002 OHS graduate, is the new OMS assistant principal and activities director, taking over for **Chris Doering** who filled the principal job at Upper Elementary.

Kendra Malizzi, OMS principal, said Begemann does a wonderful job of building relationships with the students. She said he has also helped the school with his knowledge of technology and has introduced the IXL online learning platform to teachers and manages the program for the building.

The program allows students to work individually on skills lined up to the Missouri Learning Standards. Teachers can assign learning targets to students after instruction or use it as assignments for virtual learners. It can also be used as reinforcement to help students learn skills that have not been mastered before because of gaps in learning.

Begemann said he enjoys working with all types of kids and tries to help those who need to make changes.

“My goal is not to punish the students but to try to change their behavior,” Begemann said.

Begemann’s background helps him bond with the students because he was involved in many school activities. He participated in track and football, and was the president of FBLA and the treasurer of Student Council, and he was a member of Science Club.

After graduating from OHS, Begemann attended William Jewell. He was first going to get a political science degree and go pre-law; however, he switched to education and “fell in love with it.”

Begemann started his teaching career at Raytown High School in 2007, and then he taught at Nevada High School from 2008 to 2011. Next, he taught at Richmond High School, where he decided to pursue an administrative de-



Brad Begemann, OMS assistant principal and activities director, and his wife, Rachael, have three daughters: Macey, 13, Mina, 2, and Audrey, 9.

gree. He was assistant principal at Richmond High School before deciding to return to his hometown and work with middle school students. Begemann said he enjoys both high school and middle school students, and he couldn’t pick a favorite between the two. One of Begemann’s main duties is helping the principal as needed. He helps with bus duty, lunch supervision and lunch counts, bus discipline and other discipline issues, and emergency drill scheduling and documentation. Another of his duties is supporting instruction. He helps set up professional development plans and schedules for teachers, attends grade level team meetings and team leader meetings and observes and evaluates teachers to help improve instruction.

Begemann also manages the custodial staff at OMS by working with them on the schedule and custodial routes.

Finally, he manages the middle school activities and sports. This includes managing practice schedules and making contest schedules for each sport.

This year, Begemann said being activities director involves an incredible amount of communication between other ADs and administration, coaches,

Apple Bus company, officials, official assignors and the OMS principal.

“District specific regulations have to be shared for each contest,” Begemann said, “and tickets made, buses scheduled and rescheduled, managing changes as they occur, and often this year, reschedules, postponements and cancellations.”

Tami Grubb, sixth-grade teacher, said she enjoys working with Begemann because of his kind heart and outgoing personality. “He is super approachable,” Grubb said, “which is a great quality to have in a boss.”

Begemann also stays busy at home with his family. He and his wife, **Rachael**, have three daughters: **Macey**, 13, **Audrey**, 9, and **Mina**, 2. He said the girls are following in his footsteps because they enjoy sports and stay very active.



Staff spotlight

This month’s featured reporter is **Avery Slusher**, OHS sophomore. She said she joined Journalism this year in hopes of embracing her inner creativity and letting the town know what is going on in the schools.

Her favorite part about newspaper class is that the class only has five other students, which allows for more one on one time with the teacher, **Kris Poisal**. She also enjoys the time she is able to work with her classmates. The small class size allows them to space out and work together while still meeting social distancing protocols.

Avery is 16-years-old and the middle child of her family. She has an older sister, **Kamryn**, who is 22, and a younger brother, **Brody**, who is eight. Her parents, **Kyle** and **Megan**, have been married for 25 years.

Avery has strong roots in Odessa. Both of Avery’s parents and their families grew up in Odessa. Avery’s grandparents, **Bob** and **Janis Slusher**, worked in the district for many years. Her grandpa was a janitor and the crossing guard, and her grandma was a lunch lady. Avery has enjoyed growing up in the district and making lifelong friends along the way.

Avery spends the majority of her time with her friends, playing volleyball and driving around town. She also enjoys spending time with her family, her friends’ families and listening to music in her car, specifically the Hannah Montana soundtrack.

Throughout her childhood, Avery spent most days with Bob and Janis. She would eat breakfast with them every day at Morgan’s, which is where T & T’s is now. Some of the waitresses would let her go to the tables with them and serve customers. Other than being at the restaurant, she would spend the rest of her days at Bob and Janis’ watching That’s



Avery Slusher

So Raven and The Wizards of Waverly Place.

From kindergarten to seventh grade, Avery would go to her grandparents’ house every day after school. Now, she spends every day after school driving around with her friends until she goes to work or to volleyball practice.

Avery also loves going on road trips. Over the summer, she went to Osage Beach with her family, and more recently, she went to Branson with her cousins. Her favorite road trip was to Orange Beach, Ala., in 2017. She went with her family and her grandparents, **Terry** and **Carol Peerson**.

STAFF

Makenzie Harget
Editor

Emily Deaton
Danika Dutel
Peyton Gross
Taelor Horne
Lilly Malizzi
Avery Slusher
Writers

Kris Poisal
Journalism Advisor

Virtual classes change the face of education at OHS

By Emily Deaton

Teachers found out in August that the school district would be pushing back the start of school until September 8 to allow for teachers to prepare for a possible virtual platform. A select group of teachers were also notified that they would be teaching online classes to students who had chosen to go entirely virtual.

All classes required to graduate were offered as virtual classes, and the virtual teachers were chosen by **Brad Briscoe**, principal. He wanted teachers who were not only experienced with the content knowledge but also comfortable with technology. Briscoe is happy with the choices and believes the teachers are doing a great job of adjusting and providing a quality virtual classroom for students.

"I'm just really proud of all of our teachers and the amount of work they put in; they're working extremely hard," Briscoe said.

Virtual teachers met before school started as a large group a few times with Briscoe and **Dave MacLean**, assistant principal, to go over what the courses should look like, teaching expectations, student expectations, syllabus expectations, grading policies, late work policies, helpful apps and programs, Google Classroom tips and more.

MacLean also developed a working document that contained some quick question and answer information to help teachers as well. Each virtual teacher also chose their own meeting/office times and developed a syllabus for each virtual course taught that contained an overview of the course as well as the general expectations.

Barie Krewson, OHS Communication Arts teacher, said the transition was a bit stressful for the virtual teachers.

"I learned of the possibility of teaching virtually in the beginning of August," Krewson said. "I didn't know what I would be

teaching or how that would look until we came back to work on August 19. With the first day of school being pushed back to September 8, myself and the other virtual teachers had time to work on our virtual platforms."

Laura Ward, OHS math teacher, said she received an email three weeks before school started informing her that she would be teaching three online classes. Ward said the correspondence also mentioned that virtual teachers would have extra time built into their day to help with lesson creation, grading and managing the online class. Teachers were given a virtual plan period to accommodate the extra workload brought on by the virtual sections. Additional training also was provided for the online teachers to help prepare them for the challenge.

The training has helped the teachers throughout the process; however, the real challenge is how much time the virtual sections are taking. Virtual teachers spend hours planning for virtual classes and keeping up on answering emails from virtual students. **Amanda Drinkwater**, OHS Spanish teacher, said her virtual section of Spanish I takes more time than she anticipated because virtual classes take longer to plan for and set up online. The virtual sections also typically have more students than seated classrooms.

"I probably spend up to 15 hours a week on planning alone for my virtual class," Drinkwater said, "and that does not include grading."

Even though virtual teachers are spending more of their free time planning, creating, posting and grading virtual assignments, they see many positives.

The teachers said it causes them to plan out lessons further in advance and helps them develop more time management and technological skills. OHS teachers in general also have

utilized Google Classroom more. This helps not only virtual students, but also students who are quarantined or just absent for a day or two.

Other benefits for students include the flexibility it allows them. Students can choose the times they work on assignments, the location they work, and have the ability to work part-time jobs while completing online classes.

"I see a lot of positives to the virtual learning platform, but students really have to be self-motivated to be successful," Krewson said.

Students have to check their email daily and keep up on the assignments posted to Google Classroom or other virtual platforms used. They also have to become familiar with the apps teachers choose to utilize. It can be more difficult for them to ask for help when they don't know the teacher in person or see them on a daily basis. Additionally, it can take a little time to get feedback from the virtual teacher, so they can't procrastinate with assignments.

With all the positives, teachers and administrators at OHS predict that virtual learning is here to stay.

Briscoe said that all of the virtual teachers are working extremely hard and doing a great job. He said the summer school teachers really piloted the virtual program and got it off to a good start.

Briscoe said he has several outstanding virtual teachers who are leading the way because of their experience with Google Classroom and a great command of their content areas. He is pleased with the work that all teachers are putting into making the virtual platform successful.

"So many teachers are doing great things with the virtual platform," Briscoe said.

OHS JV Girls' tennis team finishes 9-1-1



Sierra Miller, senior JV tennis player, hits a forehand.

By Taelor Horne

OHS JV girls tennis team finished the season on September 28 with a win over Center, bringing the team's record to 9-1-1.

Team's only loss was 0-3 against Lafayette County C-1, Higginsville. Tie was with St. Michael the Archangel, 1-1. The girls also took second place in the Excelsior Springs JV tournament on September 16 where they tied Kearney in pool play and only fell to them by three points in the finals.

"This group wanted to play, and it showed their eagerness and love for the sport," **Allan Twilligear**, OHS Science teacher and tennis coach, said.

Team worked hard throughout the season to achieve its goals of learning the game and continuing to improve throughout the season. Thirteen players returned from last year, and each worked hard to be a better player than last season and to adjust to the differences brought about by COVID-19 protocols.

Practices were different because the team had to split up into smaller groups to work on skills such as backhands and forehands. The team also had to change how they warmed up to allow for proper social distancing.

"We were able to be socially distant much of the time. We didn't have to wear our masks during actual play time but were required to put them on when off the courts," **Danika Dutel**, sophomore, said.

Twilligear said they were impacted by COVID-19, but he felt like the girls did a good job of trying to stay healthy and eligible to play. He said they had discussion early on and discussed what needed to be done.

"I think the girls did a great job distancing themselves from other teams, wearing masks when they weren't playing and doing what it took to stay healthy throughout the season," Twilligear said.

Throughout the season, three girls were quarantined at different times causing them to miss play. Twilligear said the girls were more worried about their season getting cut short than being quarantined.

"We knew that the season could come to an end at any moment, and we had to be mentally ready for that," Twilligear said. "We had a few scares from other teams, but we kept our distance and followed the guidelines."

See **TENNIS**, page 4

Students share views of online learning

VIRTUAL from page 1

"I think the one and only advantage of being a virtual student," Fisher said, "is I get to do my work at any time of the day."

All of the virtual students said they had a lot of adjusting to do when they decided to go virtual as it was quite different from the seated learning environment. They said it was more difficult in many ways because they didn't have immediate access to the teacher and they missed out on group work, manipulatives and labs.

Elliott said he had advice for

anyone who was considering going virtual.

"If you do go virtual, make sure you have a schedule for yourself, so you can stay motivated to do your work," Elliott said.

Students had the opportunity to change their placement by contacting their building principal by December 4. Second semester begins January 19, but administrators, teachers and other building staff need time to prepare. Students will remain virtual or seated for the entire semester once the choice is made.

Third-graders donate money to help koalas

KOALA from page 1

Harper went on to say, "People cut down their homes, but they can't live on the ground because they eat certain leaves (eucalyptus) and those are in the trees."

She also warned that people hunt them down for their fur.

"It hurts my feelings to know people hurt koalas for their fur," Harper said. "I don't know why their fur is important to people."

The girls ultimately raised over \$200 to send to an animal hospital in Australia.

"I was excited and a little nervous that we made that much money because I didn't want to lose it," Aylee said. "Mr. Doering helped us research places to send the money."

Doering submitted the donation online and wrote, "This is a donation from Mrs. Robin Smith's students that attend the Odessa Upper Elementary in Odessa, Missouri, USA."

Mr. Doering also printed a receipt for each of the girls to keep.

Roger Feagan, assistant superintendent of the Odessa R-7 School District and Aylee's father, mentioned that Aylee has always been the type of kid to want to help out and do what she can to make a difference.

"I'm proud to know that she wanted to help," Feagan said.

Ashley Ray, counselor at OHS and Harper's mom, explained that Harper was very passionate and adamant about wanting to raise the money.

"Harper is always helping others, especially those who are struggling," Ray said.



McQuerry students build a 3D skeleton

By Danika Dutel
Peyton Gross

Herb Schell, McQuerry Elementary art teacher, has found a creative way to turn individual student work into a collaboration, allowing his students to continue their art enrichment while meeting necessary social distancing protocols.

In previous years, students were able to work on a variety of art projects together when their current class assignment was finished. However, this year, Schell had to come up with something new that would allow students to work independently while creating a group project.

Students are making 3D skeletons from pieces cut out of milk jugs and cardboard. Students get to decorate their own bones, and put them all together as a whole.

"They always see me working on projects at my desk," Schell said, "so they're always interested in what I'm doing and if they'll get to do it. So, this is one they will get to participate in."

Schell said he got the idea for the project because he saw something similar on Pinterest and thought it would be a good fit. The project reinforces repetition, pattern recognition and the elements of lines, shapes and colors.

"We do a lot of work with patterns, and I just thought we could incorporate it in, along with studying different cultures. With Halloween coming up, I just saw it as a way to kill two birds with one stone," Schell said.

The project, Schell said, is

based off the Day of the Dead, "Dia De Los Muertos," which is a Mexican holiday celebrated on November 2.

"Most of my students have seen the animated movie, *Coco*, which is about this holiday," Schell said.

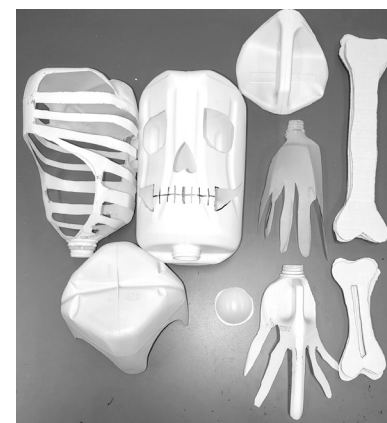
"I like the skeleton project because it's fun and creative," **Grace West**, second-grader, said.

"I like using the markers with all the different colors," **Owen LaBoube**, second-grader, said.

Schell said the students have ownership with this hands-on project where everyone gets to add a piece to the final project. He said they sometimes even have a hard time letting go of their pieces.

"It's part of the experience," Schell said.

Schell said the project is just getting started, and he is continuing to get materials together and get the pieces cut out and ready for the students. Schell said it takes 12 milk jugs to create one skeleton, and he anticipates using more than 300 milk jugs for the project. He has stu-



Students recycle milk jugs for their art project.

dents and teachers bring in milk jugs. The hardest part, according to Schell, is peeling off the labels because it is time consuming.

"It may take the whole school year," Schell said.

Schell said COVID-19 has made art class a little more difficult because it takes twice as long to get projects finished.

"I have to clean every individual marker, paint brush and just clean everything before other classes get to use them," Schell said.

OHS JV girls tennis team finishes strong

TENNIS from page 3

The varsity team will have seven of eight players graduating this year, leaving numerous open spots to be filled next season. **Liberty Hobson**, junior, will be the sole returning varsity player.

Hannah Begemann, Leigha Hadlock and

Keirsten Tribble, juniors, and **Claire Covey, Marcie Davis, Danika Dutel and Ryley Sanders**, sophomores, will definitely be in the running for varsity spots next year," Twilligear said.

Sanders and Dutel went 9-3 in doubles; Covey and Davis went 7-1; and Hadlock and Tribble went 7-2.

THE Mixing Bowl
BAKING COMPANY

OLDE FASHIONED BAKERY
DOWNTOWN ODESSA, MO

107 S 2nd St., Odessa MO 64076

Tel. No. 816-6335500

**Now taking holiday orders
... don't wait till it's too
late !!!**

