

'Wild' author Strayed wows overflow crowd

CORVALLIS (AP) — Nearly 2,000 people thronged an Oregon college auditorium for an appearance by the author of "Wild," hours after a movie based on the best-selling memoir about a thousand-mile hike earned two Oscar nominations.

Cheryl Strayed wrote the book about her walk along the Pacific Crest Trail in 1995 and described it Thursday night to an overflow audience at Oregon State University.

It was the largest crowd at the university's LaSells Stewart Center for such an event, college official Shelly Signs said. Hundreds watched on monitors in the lobby and another auditorium, the *Corvallis Gazette-Times* reported.

Oscar nominations were announced earlier in the day: Reese Witherspoon was named for her performance as Strayed, and Laura Dern for hers as Strayed's mother.

"How could this even be possible? It makes me want to cry," Strayed said. "It's astounding to me that one day people playing me and my mom would be nominated for an Oscar."

The book describes how Strayed reacted to her mother's death from lung cancer, and how she walked her way out of a dark time that included adultery and heroin use.

"When she died, I didn't know how to live," Strayed said. "In my sorrow I lost my way. I got married; I did a lot of things married people shouldn't do. Well, I did a lot of things single people shouldn't do, except in moderation."

Looking for a way out of her mental state, she hiked the California and Oregon segments of the trail that



PHOTO BY LARRY D. MOORE CC BY-SA 3.0
"Wild" author Cheryl Strayed.

runs along the mountainous spine of the West Coast from Mexico to Canada.

The university audience cheered and clapped for Strayed's stories and asked questions about mother-daughter relations, her approach to writing and her work as an advice columnist.

Strayed began writing "Wild" in 2008.

As the book was being prepared for publication, in 2012, Strayed sent a copy to Witherspoon, who bought the rights before it hit the shelves.

Six weeks after release, the film has taken in \$30 million.

Strayed had a small part, as a pickup truck driver who drops off Witherspoon at the starting point of her hike.

And she had a line: "Good luck."

Editor's note: "Wild" is currently playing at Sisters Movie House.

Early Childhood Matters to Sisters

By Edie Jones
Sisters Early Childhood Resource Team

An article in the January 16 edition of *The Bulletin* featured article headlines, "How our kindergartners compare." It reported assessments of six school districts in Central Oregon.

The article reported that Sisters' kindergartners scored higher than any of the other districts in "Letter Names" and "Letter Sounds," but only at the state average in "Simple Math."

Why the disparity between numbers and literacy, and does that difference matter?

It is important to keep in mind that the kindergarten assessment was designed to create a "snapshot" of readiness, and included skills the children need as they start their formal school experience. The information was gathered by teachers asking the children appropriate simple questions, and observing social-emotional behavior and self-regulation skills. All of these developmental areas are important predictors of later reading and math achievement and are important components of kindergarten readiness.

There has been much emphasis in the news as to the importance of early literacy skills. Hats-off to parents who have picked up on this and made it a point to read to their preschoolers

and introduce them to the fun of reading. The libraries have also done an excellent job of making sure parents are informed on how to read and enjoy literacy activities with their youngest children. It is well known by educators that if a child is not reading by grade three they most likely will have difficulty as they progress through the grades. In other words, until grade three children are learning to read, from then on they are reading to learn.

What then should we think about being at the state average in Simple Math? This is probably an indicator that parents have not had the same kind of encouragement to assist their young ones in thinking about numbers.

There are many ways to help 4- and 5-year-olds incorporate simple math into the natural order of their day. Asking questions such as, "How many animals are running?" while observing three dogs in the park, or, "We need five oranges at home and we

only have three. How many do we need to buy?" when shopping. Or: "You just put two books on the shelf. How many still need to be picked up?" Introduce counting, adding, and subtraction. There are many games that include numbers, which include sequencing and sets that are fun and give children the type of skills that will be assessed when entering kindergarten.

The more parents are aware of the importance of this type of informal teaching, the better prepared their children will be.

Parents who would like to know more about the Oregon Kindergarten Assessment can find information by visiting <http://bit.ly/1E6e4uy>. Besides comparisons of the school districts, there is a parents' guide that shows the kind of questions their kids will be asked, giving ideas a parent can easily incorporate into helping their soon-to-be-kindergartner get ready for a very exciting adventure.

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