

RETREAT: Students learn about teamwork in the outdoors

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together “for the common good” as Brad Tisdell put it.

“Through drumming and team-building, each student had their own personal accountability, as well as playing a role in the effort for the group to be successful, by focusing on working well with others,” he said.

Tisdell explained further, “The main purpose of the middle school retreats is to get students away from school, see each other in a different context and create opportunities for students to do new things and see each other differently. The overall effect is they realize they have more in common than not with most of the other kids, and they show a greater deal of respect and empathy, and a similar human connection and experience.

“In addition,” he said, “the kids also challenge themselves to do something new, and we hope they begin to see how important it is for them at this age to simply be themselves, and not worry too much about the judgement of others.

“The high school leaders/mentors help tremendously

with being able to model appropriate behavior and share insight about high school and the need to be comfortable with being yourself, being unique and seeing yourself as a valued individual within a group,” he said.

Surprisingly, few of the students had ever been on cross-country skis, according to teacher Becky Aylor.

“It was a fabulous day of learning outdoors,” she said. “Let’s face it, what student doesn’t enjoy a day away from the classroom now and then.”

The snow shelter/outdoor survival station allowed students to learn real skills in how to survive in a snow cave, but also gave ample opportunity to work together to make a suitable, safe structure.

“Most of us here in Central Oregon get out in the snow for all sorts of activities, so it only makes sense to introduce students to ways of enhancing their chances of survival if something went wrong when out in the backcountry,” said Tisdell. “Beyond that, it’s just plain fun to build a snow shelter together, but making a good quality one requires some planning, cooperation, and hard work.”

The drumming session was also multi-dimensional, according to Tisdell.

“Our schools and community truly value creativity through the visual and

performing arts, so the drumming provided a real life opportunity to make music, but required listening, teamwork, and a little bit of courage to make it work.”

Staff and students revisited the themes of the retreat at the end of the day with a debriefing session back at the middle school. A spring retreat is likely to wrap up the year.

Tisdell takes a comprehensive, holistic view of Sisters School District’s “out-of-the-building” programs.

“With programs like the fourth-grade field trip, sixth-grade outdoor school, middle school retreats and the IEE program at the high school, the aim is to keep a thread of community, communication, and cooperation alive in order to maintain the experiential and supportive culture for which Sisters schools are known,” said Tisdell.

Authors will appear at bookstore

Carolyn Wood will read from and sign her book, “Tough Girl: An Olympian’s Journey,” on Friday, March 17 at 6 p.m. at Paulina Springs Books.

As 65-year-old Wood walks the Camino de Santiago she reflects on her youthful determination that took her to Rome and gold at the 1960 Olympics. She discovered she had a resilience that helped her to accept and understand many relationships in her past and present life. Wood makes it clear that we all face many hurdles in life, but we can overcome.

On Friday, March 31 at 6 p.m., William Tweed will read and sign his book,

“King Sequoia: The Tree That Inspired a Nation, Created Our National Park System, and Changed the Way We Think about Nature.”

Former park ranger Tweed explores the American public’s relationship with the majestic sequoias. When the sequoias were threatened by logging interests, the feelings of horror that were expressed by the public helped to inspire the park idea. Featuring a cast of adventurers, politicians, and environmentalists, King Sequoia reveals how one tree transformed America.

Refreshments will be served. Paulina Springs Books is located at 252 W. Hood Ave. For info call 541-549-0866.

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