

Start thinking about that next sheepskin



Kelsey Stone
CANYON VIEWS

While many students across Oregon will walk across a stage and receive their high school diploma in the next month, graduation season is also a great reminder to families and students of what comes after commencement. This season, and the months ahead, are the perfect time of year for parents of high school students to help their children explore higher education opportunities.

The "down time" of summer can open many opportunities for families, and help parents discuss post-graduation plans with their students before their senior year. Visiting a college campus

is a crucial step in this process.

It can be challenging for students to narrow down their list of potential colleges. After all, there are 4,700 institutions awarding degrees across the nation, according to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics.

Students should evaluate potential colleges to see if they are a "good fit" based on their major, financial aid, campus environment, and other factors. Families can take a "virtual college road trip" on the Internet first to help with the selection process.

Check out a few websites which offer "Virtual College Road Trip" experiences:

1) www.CollegeBoard.org helps students build an initial list of schools to meet their needs based on location, academics and more.

2) www.CollegeWeekLive.com connects students to free virtual college fairs with hundreds

of colleges and universities around the world.

3) www.ecampus-tours.com/ offers students 360° virtual college tours of over a thousand college campuses.

4) <http://www.college-view.com> enables students to search for colleges by things like majors and tuition.

5) <https://niche.com/> provides online reviews of thousands of colleges written by students, for students.

Researching college options ahead of time helps focus the list of potential schools, but websites will never replace an in-person campus tour. In order to get the most out of a college visit, here are a few suggestions to keep in mind:

Tips for a Successful "On-Campus" College Visit:

1) Create a wish list. Ask students to write down the top five things they're looking for in a college. Along with that list, they should jot down a few questions to ask tour guides, admissions repre-

sentatives, professors, and students on each campus tour. Remember to ask about the basics, like safety, housing, transportation, and Wi-Fi access, but also questions that are personally important to your student's vision of his or her college experience. Students should bring a tablet (paper or electronic) to take notes, and write down email addresses and phone numbers for follow up questions and thank you cards.

2) Timing is everything. There may be fewer classes in session during the summer, but by visiting during this season students often get more personalized attention on campus tours.

Students can even arrange college visits to coincide with a family vacation during the summer months, or group area colleges together for a college-themed road trip.

The typical campus may be quieter than usual, but students can check out the summer term class schedule and plan to visit when college stu-

dents are there.

The school might also be open to prospective students scheduling an appointment with an admissions adviser when they sign up for a campus tour.

This can help show initiative and that your student is very interested in learning more about the school.

3) Get the real scoop. Students should create their own tour after the official one is over. Consider trying common activities, things such as sitting in on a class or eating at a campus dining hall.

Students can also get good feedback wandering around campus, talking to professors or seeking candid answers from other students about the institution. Exploring the surrounding community to check out local recreation and entertainment venues is also useful.

4) Keep an open mind. It's important for students to keep an open mind and not form any opinions right away. Wait until the visit is over to

talk about whether the college is a good fit, and what aspects your student did or didn't like about the college. They shouldn't let things like bad weather cloud their judgment.

For more suggestions about planning college tours, visit:

www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org and www.educationquest.org.

Finding a college can be a daunting process for high school students, but remember that this is also a very exciting time for them. Each student has their own unique needs, not just for academics, but also for campus life and extracurricular activities. Once the student has done all the research and toured a few campuses, they'll realize they're not just finding a college, they're also searching for a home.

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Wildfire season on horizon; protect your home

JUSTIN MUCH
STAYTON MAIL

Very little memory jog is needed to recall the Pacific Northwest's brutal wildfire season of summer 2015.

In fact, the past several summers have shown a trend that concerns forest service and fire officials all around the region - including firefighters of our own nearby east Willamette Valley municipalities. Oregon Department of Forestry has issued a number of reminders to residents statewide, and a number of local fire officials have chimed in, with hopes that precautions taken can turn back the recent trends of fiery dry seasons.

"Every year the Silverton Fire District responds to numerous wildfires in fields or in heavy timber in our response area," said Silverton Fire District Captain Ed Grambusch. "Many of these fires threaten nearby

homes and other structures. Homeowners have a responsibility to ensure that they take measures to keep their home is safe during a wildfire situation."

Kristin Babbs, president of ODF's Keep Oregon Green Association, noted that May is Wildfire Awareness Month and the ideal time to reduce the excess vegetation around your home that could pose a wildfire threat.

"Prepare around your house with defensible space, make sure," said Jay Alley, assistant chief of Stayton Fire.

"Having a 30-foot fire break around the home is extremely important," Grambusch said. "Fire breaks consist of low growing bushes kept away from the home, green grass that is kept short and well-watered, and keeping dry debris cleared from the area."

"Fire breaks give firefighters a much better chance at saving a home



COURTESY OF SILVERTON FIRE DISTRICT
Serious wildland fire during the summer of 2015 occurred near the Oregon Gardens and threatened some nearby homes.

than those that do not have a fire break," he said.

Babbs said Oregon State Fire Marshal joined other fire officials in urging residents to consider chipping or recycling yard debris. But if burning is the only option to dispose of woody material, fire officials urge landowners to follow safe burning practices.

"If you do burn your debris, use common sense and follow safety rules," said State Fire Marshal Jim Walker. "This can prevent most wildfires

caused by burning debris, and keep lives and property safe."

Babbs said escaped debris burns are the leading human cause of wildfire issues in Oregon, particularly during the early- and late-season periods when people think it is safe and permissible to burn.

In 2015, backyard debris burns that got out of control resulted in 133 wildfires that burned 224 acres at a cost of nearly \$381,000. Oregon experienced severe fire seasons from 2013-15. Extreme conditions those three

years set the stage for any debris burn that got away to spread rapidly.

A burn pile is less likely to escape control if these simple safety tips are followed: call before you burn; know the weather forecast; keep burn piles small and clear a 10-foot radius around them; always have water and tools nearby and ready; stay with the fire until it's completely out; never use gas; burn only yard debris. Aumsville Rural Fire District Chief Terrill Isaak emphasizes each of the above, and reminds further that wind can be a hazard.

"The wind direction could be a factor along with wind speed," Isaak said. "Make sure the wind is not blowing embers towards buildings, large areas of weeds, and dry vegetation. Keep a defensible space around all buildings."

And keep an eye on it. "Almost always when we get called out to a fire,

folks say I just went into the house, shop, or where ever for a few minutes and when I returned the fire was everywhere," Isaak added. It doesn't hurt to keep your pocketbook in mind. State Fire Marshal cites state law which requires the proper clearing, building, attending and extinguishing of open fires any time of year. A first-time citation carries a \$110 fine. If your debris burn spreads out of control, you are responsible for the cost of fire suppression and very likely the damage to neighboring properties. This can range from a few hundred to thousands of dollars.

Alley also said backyard burning season in this area ends June 15, and he advises people to go to the Stayton Fire website to gain familiarity with burning information.

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