

Rip City Rally

The Portland Trail Blazers and Moda Health made Baker City the first stop on this year's Rip City Rally route across Oregon. Other stops on the week-long tour were La Grande, Hermiston, The Dalles and Sandy.

Last spring, Baker City received a grant of nearly \$40,000 for an all-abilities playground through the Moda Assist program, which donates \$20 for each assist the Blazers make during the regular season.

While in Baker City, the Rip City Rally included PE takeovers at Baker Middle School and Haines Elementary, an assembly at Brooklyn Primary with Blaze the Trail Cat and Blazer Dancers, a career panel at Baker High School, and an evening celebration downtown.

Bulldog Pride

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Career advice from pros

Reps from Trail Blazers and Moda share insight

It wasn't all about playing professional basketball.

In fact, none of the panel of speakers dribble a basketball in the Moda Center but each contributes to the success of the Portland Trail Blazers and Moda Health.

The group was in town for the Rip City Rally on September 9, a community party held in towns across Oregon to kick off this year's Trail Blazer season.

A panel of six gathered at Baker High School to talk to students about careers related to sports and health care.

But first, they talked about the path to their current jobs.

"I thought I was going to be a rockstar, but went to college anyway," said Duane Hankins, chief marketing officer for the Blazers.

He started in journalism and mass communication, then moved to sports PR. He's worked with teams around the country. His advice was to "take risks and go out of your comfort zone."

"If you want to move up, you can't always do that with the team in your backyard," he said. "I never thought I'd live in the Northwest. Get uncomfortable, and be okay with being uncomfortable."

Brooke Olzendam, the courtside reporter who interviews coaches and players, talked about challenges of being female in a male-dominated industry.

"I like to be as prepared as possible, as knowledgeable as possible," she said. "A lot



The panel included, from left, Hillary Gorlin, Duane Hankins, Amara Baptist, Brooke Olzendam, Erin O'Brien and Andrew Knister.

of eyeballs are watching for me to mess up."

However, she knows her opinion is valued by colleagues.

"We're at a day and age that it's becoming a level playing field," she said.

On the health care side Erin O'Brien, director of marketing and brand for Moda, talked about her career path — from investigative journalism to advertising to the health field in 2012. This all came after she gave up on broadcast journalism.

"When I got in front of the camera, it was a disaster," she said.

Everyone on the panel talked about having tenacity. Olzendam reported on college campus, then the sidelines, then in the world of professional sports.

"The goal is to love going to work," she said. "It's the



Third-grader Clancey Boehm raced second-grade teacher Morgan Colvin in a challenge during a Rip City assembly at Brooklyn Primary School.

best job I've ever had."

Amara Baptist is the digital content manager for the Blazers. A question posed to her was how she handles the negative posts — "the haters"

— on the various social media platforms she monitors.

"A lot of people don't think of the human behind the account," she said. "I've learned to not take it personal."