

Attendance problem defies easy solutions

by SCOTT NEWTON

John McMahan, Sandy Union High School principal, doesn't mind rewriting the attendance policy procedures.

He's in his third year as principal, and he's rewritten them every year so far.

But, with eight different sets of policy procedures in eight years, the numbers reportedly remain fairly constant.

According to a study done between Nov. 3 and Jan. 19 of this year, 129 students out of about 1,250 missed school on the average, or about 10 percent.

Sixty students, or 4 percent, dropped out of school last year. Some of them will re-enroll, and others will take a G.E.D. class.

Due to economic conditions, McMahan feels that the dropout rate will be less than 4 percent this year. Of that 10 percent, some absences

are excused, while others are not, although the current policy does not distinguish between the two.

McMahan's attitude is easy to peg. "Frankly, I don't work with percentages. I work with people," he said. "The problem isn't percentages, it's people. It's communication."

Currently, after five consecutive, or collective, days absent, a student's parents will be called.

After 10 absences, a conference is set up with the student, parents and an administrator.

At 15 days, a student is in a position to lose credit.

"Only those that we've tried everything on are out of school," McMahan said.

Students have the right to make up work, although this can cause problems as some students wait until the last moment to do it.

Differentiating between excused and unexcused absences has in the past caused certain problems.

It has been obvious in the past that some notes from home had been written by the student and then signed by a parent. That works all right until a student tells his parents he was somewhere that he was not, and someone at the school knows better. Then it pits the school against the student and the parent.

Notes also require certain "FBI kinds of work," such as checking the signature or calling the parent for confirmation.

With all its drawbacks, however, it appears that the school will go back to the excused-unexcused system.

McMahan reports having talked to about 120 parents, as well as students, teachers and others in the community.

Some of the changes proposed include an excused-unexcused system, with four reasons for an excused absence.

They include pre-arranged school activities, illness or an illness in the

family, an emergency, such as a death in the family, or a special parental request.

The special parental request could be the most troublesome. It would include doctor's appointments, court appearances or family vacations.

Except for an illness or death in the family, these absences could be arranged before the fact, which should help solve the problem of making up work.

Another proposed revision is to change the 5-10-15 system to 3-6-10.

In other words, parents would be called if a student misses three days of class, rather than the current five.

McMahan feels that they're doing pretty well at five days. Calling at three days will be more difficult, he said, but they'll do it.

Many parents would like to be called the very first time their child misses a class. "I don't have the staff to do it," McMahan said.

He is concerned about the amount

of time spent on the problem 10 percent rather than the 80 to 90 percent that are in class and doing well.

Currently there are two field counselors who check the halls, and the area, for students who should be in class. Also, there are two full-time people who, during the day, primarily work on attendance, which includes filing records, feeding the computer, and making academic and disciplinary referrals.

In addition, other clerical workers make calls to parents, and a person is hired to make calls from 5-8 p.m. in the evenings.

It is difficult to get ahold of some parents, McMahan said. Others, he said, tell them not to bother to call anymore.

"Some parents don't take education seriously," McMahan said.

Even money wouldn't solve the problem, McMahan contends. "People are the problem, people are the solution," he said.

The problem existed, he said, even when the school had a full-time attendance counselor, and even more staff members than they have now to deal with it.

McMahan said that his goal is to direct the creative energy students use to find a way to get out of school back into the classroom.

He pointed out that there are schools with much more serious problems than SUHS.

Participation is essential in a democracy, he said. "It's the thing that makes our country great, and the place to learn it is in the school."

He hopes parents and others in the community will participate in the town hall-type meeting planned for March 29 at 7:30 in rooms 50-51 of the high school.

McMahan said he wants to develop attendance procedures that fit the community, but people from the community need to participate, tell him what they want.

Mt. Hood plan to be reviewed

by MICHAEL P. JONES
Post Correspondent

The location of the citizen review meeting for the Mt. Hood Community Plan, scheduled for tonight at 7:30 p.m., has been changed to Welches Grade School.

Originally, it was announced that the review was to be at the Women's Club.

The informational meeting is the first of two which will allow residents, property owners, developers, special interest groups and other users, an opportunity to review policies, zoning ordinances, and land-use designations, as currently proposed by the Clackamas County planning staff.

On hand at the meeting will be resource maps prepared by the planning staff showing areas of proposed land use changes.

Please turn to Page 2.

Man supports development

D.L. "Don" Broetje, Republican candidate for the Clackamas County Commission, would support the evaluation of the present salaries of county employees and elected officials, basing them on responsibility and performance, if elected.

Broetje has been self employed most of his life. He owned Dee Distributing from 1948 through 1964, was a distributor for Standard Oil from 1964 through 1963, and is presently owner of Winsco Inc., and Don L. and Associates.

He is chairman of the Oak Lodge Community Council, and a representative of the unincorporated area on the Clackamas County Development Policy Advisory Board.

A member of a Clackamas County pioneer family, he attended Milwaukie High School and Lewis and Clark College.

He is married, with three grown children and two grandchildren. He resides in the family home, built in the late 1800s.

As commissioner, besides

evaluating salaries of county employees, Broetje said he would consolidate county offices to a single location, rehabilitate downtown Oregon City and preserve its history as a county and state seat.



D.L. Broetje

Driver investigated for assault after accident on Saturday

by MICHAEL P. JONES
Post Correspondent

A single-car accident, which resulted in injury to two persons Saturday, is being investigated by the Oregon State Police as a possible assault case.

Trooper Bill Lewis of the OSP Portland office said that his department was first notified at 6 a.m. Saturday by personnel of the Oregon State Highway Division. He said they informed them of a small pickup "driving in an erratic manner down Timberline Road," just east of Government Camp.

Lewis said patrols in the vicinity were notified to be on the lookout for the vehicle, described as a small, red and black 4X4.

At 6:30 Lewis said that the Clackamas County Communications Center (C-COM) notified them that a 1981 LTS Datsun pickup had struck a pole.

The accident occurred in front of J.J. Fox's Arco station on Highway

26, between Brightwood and Alder Creek.

Injured in the wreck were two Woodburn, Ore., residents.

The driver, 32-year-old Danny Albin Halter, had possible rib injuries and was transported to Gresham Community Hospital, and admitted.

Halter was listed in satisfactory condition Tuesday morning.

Also injured in the mishap was 20-year-old Wendy Jo Sauer. She was also transported to Gresham Community Hospital by Alpine Ambulance. She was treated for minor injuries and later released.

Lewis said the incident is being investigated by Sgt. Dan E. Wolf of the OSP Government Camp Outpost.

He said that because Halter is suspected of being under the influence of intoxicants while operating a motor vehicle, and because another person was injured in the accident, under Oregon law he could be charged with assault.

He could also be charged with

DUI.

Chuck Mitchell, assistant district attorney for Clackamas County, said Tuesday no charges have yet been filed against the driver.

He said, "A person, if he intentionally, knowingly or recklessly causes physical injury to another can be charged with assault in the fourth degree."

'50s-60s dance is March 27

A '50s-60s dance is being held by the Mt. Hood Lions Club on March 27 to raise funds.

The dinner and dance is open to the public.

Serving will begin at 6:30 for the steak and oyster dinner. The dance will start at 9. There will be a \$7 charge.

The dance will be held at the Mt. Hood Lions Club building.

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