

Honor students lend time, insight to fellow students at WMS

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

When Simon Hocker made the leap from elementary school in Bend to Keizer's Whiteaker Middle School, it caused more than a little disruption.

"It was kind of depressing, I came here and it seemed like there were a few kids who just didn't like me," Simon said.

A month ago, he received a visit from Pat Curran, one of the Whiteaker counselors, and was invited into a new mentoring program at the school that pairs National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) eighth graders with sixth graders needing extra help in and out of class.

"The first day we played some games and I had a couple of people I wanted to be partners with, but they were already taken. I was paired with Layla (Climer) and she probably is way better than the others would have been," Simon said.

Layla said she volunteered for the program because it fit nicely with her own priorities. "I really like helping people and it's fun to know you're making a difference and helping someone else," Layla said. "The cool thing is that (Simon's) grades are getting better. I've learned that if you work hard for something you can



KEIZERTIMES/ERIC A. HOWALD
Sion Springer works through math problems with mentee Shawn Todd.

make it happen."

More than 20 Whiteaker NJHS students are volunteering to be mentors for sixth graders at the school. Once a week, the students meet with their sixth grade mentees to work on homework, get organized or just talk about how the past week has gone.

It's a pilot program at Whiteaker, but one Curran has implemented at other area schools.

"It's as much about the social piece as it is help with homework," Curran said. "This program gives the sixth graders someone they can turn to ask questions about life, teachers, navigating the school and just

about anything else."

Sixth graders are selected for the program based primarily on grades, but Curran and the school's other counselors are also fielding recommendations from teachers who find their students aren't making social connections.

Both the mentors and the mentees miss one of their regular classes each Wednesday to participate in the program, but early feedback has been positive.

"The teachers say it is helping and it's worth it for the one-on-one help," Curran said.

Most of the pairs spend much of the time working on

math homework, and it's as much about providing good role modeling as it is about fractions and percentages.

Eighth grader Wyatt Kirk works with sixth grader Jaren Adams and the duo was embroiled in a math assignment last week.

"I just try to teach what I did to help him learn good habits," said Wyatt.

Sixth grader Hailey Carpenter found herself falling behind after missing a lot of school. She received a note from one of her teachers suggesting she give the mentoring program a try.

"I had a lot of homework to catch up on and it's really helped with that," Hailey said.

Hailey was paired with eighth grader Maya Luscomb. Maya said organization was one of the first things they tackled.

"We worked a lot on keeping binders organized so she could keep track of all the as-

signments," Maya said.

While much of the work takes place across a table, mentors have even made field trips to lockers to help students get organized there, too.

Eighth grader Madeline Bielby had worked with another sixth grader for the first four weeks of the program, but that student transferred to another school. Last week was her first meeting with her new mentee, Elena Perreira.

Elena said she wasn't sure what to expect when she came to the first meeting.

"I figured it would be a group of us, I didn't think it would have my own partner to work with," Elena said. "I like this and I think I'm going to score really big on my next math assignment."

Madeline, who saw great success with her first mentee, knew that the help she provides can make a big difference.

"At the end of the first semester, my first partner was struggling with her grades, but she was up to As and Bs when she transferred to her new school," Madeline said.

Vote online for Whiteaker coach

Longtime Whiteaker Middle School coach Scott Coburn has been named one of three finalists for the Comcast SportsNet All-Star Coach Program.

The coach who is awarded the All-Star Coach title for Oregon will receive \$5,000 for the school where he/she coaches. Voting has begun online at www.csnw.com. The final award presentation will take place at the Portland Trail Blazers game on April 2.

School district expecting budget bump

By HERB SWETT
For the Keizertimes

The budget committee of the Salem-Keizer School District held its first meeting on the 2016-17 budget Tuesday, hearing school officials say some increase was likely.

It was an organizational meeting. The proposed budget will not be proposed until April 26. The budget adopted last year for the current school year was \$665,720,876.

Board vice chair Nancy MacMorris-Adix, presiding in the absence of chair Rick Kimball, was elected committee chair. That position normally alternates between board and community members. Rachel

Dewey Thorsett, a community member, was elected vice chair.

The committee consists of the seven board members and seven people from the community.

Board members besides Kimball and MacMorris-Adix are Chris Brantley, Jim Green, Marty Heyen, Paul Kylo and Chuck Lee. Other community members are Marcia Atkinson, Mark Bateman, Lloyd Chapman, Levi Herrera-Lopez, Adam Kohler and Betty Patacolli.

After reviewing the duties and procedures of the committee, superintendent Christy Perry asked that questions about the budget be directed

to her and Mike Wolfe, district chief operating officer, together.

"The second year of the biennium is looking very positive," Wolfe told the committee.

"We are a growing district," Perry said, "so we are seeing more revenue."

Noting that availability of teachers has increased, Perry said the school system has begun an early hiring process in the hope of placing more of the "right teachers in front of kids."

Christy will present the budget message April 26. The committee will hold a work session May 10, and budget hearing dates are tentatively scheduled for May 16 through 19.



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