

KeizerCommunity

KEIZERTIMES.COM

Thomas named top music educator

By DEREK WILEY
Of the Keizertimes

Andy Thomas, choir director at Whiteaker Middle School, wants all kids to experience music.

It's why a couple years ago he started an Exploratory Wheel class for all sixth graders. It's why he volunteers his time after school to teach guitar lessons.

And why every summer he leads a week-long choir and drama camp for fourth through ninth graders that last year had over 220 kids.

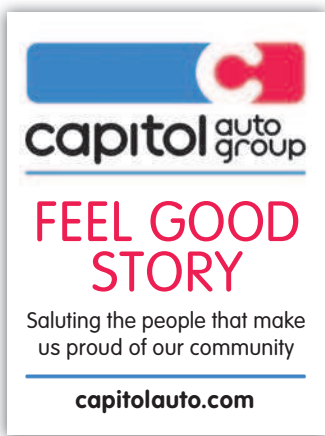
Thomas was recently honored for providing more opportunities to Whiteaker students and kids throughout Keizer with the Salem-Keizer Music Educator of the Year award.

"It's a great honor to be given an award like that," Thomas said. "It's just nice to be given a pat on the back sometimes for the work you do, all the extra time and effort and hours that you put in as a music educator."

Thomas got his own education in music at McKay High School.

"My high school choir director (Charles Graber) is the reason why I'm here today," Thomas said. "He was a very inspirational and had a powerful presence in my life."

Thomas is in his 12th year at Whiteaker, which already had a tradition of excellence, but he has grown the choir from 180-190 seats to over 280.



The annual cabaret also existed as a dessert night but Thomas turned it into a bigger fundraiser event that draws an audience of more than a thousand.

"I love it because it is an event that brings the community together," Thomas said. "It's an event that let's our kids shine. We make money. Their self confidence and self worth just goes off the charts."

The guitar lessons came out of the summer camp and last year Whiteaker was able to purchase a full set of guitars. Thomas teaches two to three sessions a year of 20-25 kids each.

"Where there's a need, I go with it and kids were interested in guitar," Thomas said.

"They love to sing at home and I can teach you four chords and you can play a lot of songs with just four chords. That's nice because we get kids in the population that aren't in a music class that come in and we get



Whiteaker Middle School choir director Andy Thomas, with registrar Rochelle Gould and principal Julia DeWitt, was named 2017 Salem-Keizer Music Educator of the Year.

more kids exposed to music."

Thomas has also been able to travel, taking his advanced choirs on trips to Florida, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Portland.

Whiteaker was one of two middle schools invited to pre-

form at the American Choral Directors Association Northwest Conference last March.

"That's a huge honor because they have one to two each year and to be selected is really difficult," Thomas said.

Whiteaker will perform at

the Oregon Music Educators Association conference next year and Thomas hosted 22 choirs in Keizer for a choral adjudication festival this spring.

When asked why he continues to go the extra mile, Thomas replied, "A passion for

the arts, a passion for the kids and a passion to give kids opportunities and experiences that will be highly impactful to them and who they are and for their growth and development. It's so good for the kids to get to do this stuff."

Submitted

Distinguished Young Women May 13

Ten McNary juniors will compete for scholarship money and the titles of Distinguished Young Women of Keizer on Saturday, May 13 at 7 p.m. in the Ken Collins Theater.

The students compete in five different categories—fitness (15 percent), talent (25), self expression (15), interview (25) and scholastic (20).

This year's talents include singing, acting, reading poetry, playing violin and dancing.

Competing are Sarah Eckert, Isabella Fox, Laura Becktel, Sydnie Gould, Taylor Johnson, Crystal Llanos, Adah Mallery, Karissa Nigg, Ivy Parker and Desiree Whitney.

Two winners will be selected by a panel of judges.

They will then advance to



Crystal Llanos practices her traditional Mexico dance.

the state program on Saturday, Aug. 5 at Chemeketa Community College to compete for even more scholarship money.

Last year's Keizer winners were Elizabeth Russell and Sydney Martindale.

Admission to the Keizer competition is \$12 and funds the scholarships.



Laura Becktel works on her vocal solo. KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley

LifeSource Natural Foods

2649 Commercial St SE
503-361-7973
LifeSourceNaturalFoods.com
Open 8am-9pm, even Sundays!
Eat Well Be Happy!

SALE ENDS MAY 17

Saturday, May 13th
World Fair Trade Day
Stand with Small-Scale Farmers

DR. BRONNER'S ORGANIC COCONUT OIL
Whole Kernel & Fair Trade
\$12.99
30 oz | Save \$6.80

MAVUNO HARVEST DRIED FRUIT
Fair Trade & Organic
2 for \$5
2 oz | Save \$1.49

EQUAL EXCHANGE CHOCOLATE BARS
Fair Trade & Organic
2 for \$5
2.8 oz | Save \$1.49 ea

WORLD FAIR TRADE DAY
MAY 13TH 2017

All Organic & Natural Produce · Groceries Bulk Foods · Pasture Raised Meats · Deli Beer & Wine · Vitamins Herbs & Body Care

YOU CAN'T SPELL MOM WITHOUT US

MOM

Mother's Day is Sunday, May 14

BOUCHER JEWELERS

MITSUBISHI GL – 12,000 BTU
NOW THROUGH MAY 31, 2017

\$2,899 Installed
Additional charge for over 15 feet. Customer supplies electrical.

Cool Deals

Hot Offers

MAJESTIC ECHELON II DIRECT VENT GAS FIREPLACE

ASK ABOUT ALSO QUALIFYING FOR UP TO \$550 OREGON TAX CREDIT

Trade Ally of
EnergyTrust
of Oregon

ABB STOVES HEARTH & HOME LLC

As an Energy Trust of Oregon trade ally, we can help you access cash incentives to make it easier to improve your home's energy efficiency.

3800 River Rd N #180 Keizer -
503-378-1125 - CCB #200318

ASK ABOUT **LAUNDRY PRO** WITH CERTIFIED SPACE TECH