

# KeizerCommunity

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Dwight Roberson (left), who started the Black Student Union at McNary High School, is pictured with club president Katelynn Byrd (middle) and club member Remy Olson.

KEIZERTIMES/  
Matt Rawlings

## School BSUs grow out of single desire to give back

BY MATT RAWLINGS  
Of the Keizertimes

Last June, Dwight Roberson was hired as the Community Resource Specialist in the office of Student Equity, Access and Advancement for the Salem-Keizer School District.

But after a few months on the job, Roberson had the urge to get more involved with students.

"I had this feeling and motivation of wanting to give back to the kids," Roberson said.

One of the things brought to his attention was the desire for a Black Student Union at all the high schools. So in December, Roberson began running BSU clubs at McNary, and all high schools in Salem-Keizer — minus West Salem.

One of his main motivations for starting the clubs was to provide cultural education for students.

"A lot kids don't know about other people's cultures," Roberson said. "There are even black students that don't know about their own culture as well, so I want to educate kids on their own culture, as well as others."

"One of my biggest beliefs is that if we all know each other's cultures, we'll be able to get along with each other and be more accepting of our differences."

While the club is geared towards African-American students, Roberson encourages all students to be a part of it.

"It might say the Black Student Union, but everyone is welcome," Roberson said. "It doesn't matter what your skin color is."

The crew at McNary meets at 7 a.m. on Thursdays in room 242 — the time moved from Thursday afternoons to accommodate students after school activities. It's still in its infancy stages, the BSU Club at McNary is often used as a place for students to do homework or just hang out.

However, most club sessions involve conversations that

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revolve around black history and current events — such as the National Anthem protests in the National Football League (NFL) — and what it's like to be a teenager in 2019.

"It's an open discussion," Roberson said. "We often have

discussions about what it's like to be a student at a place like McNary High School. You will always get different opinions and different views. It's very interesting. You learn a lot about what the students go through and how they view things through their lens."

"I want the kids to always want to come back, so I try to gear the conversations towards what they want."

In a school that has very few African-Americans, the addition of a BSU at McNary has been beneficial for providing community and education for students.

"It's nice to actually have a community because the African-American community in Keizer is very sparse," said Katelynn Byrd, who is the

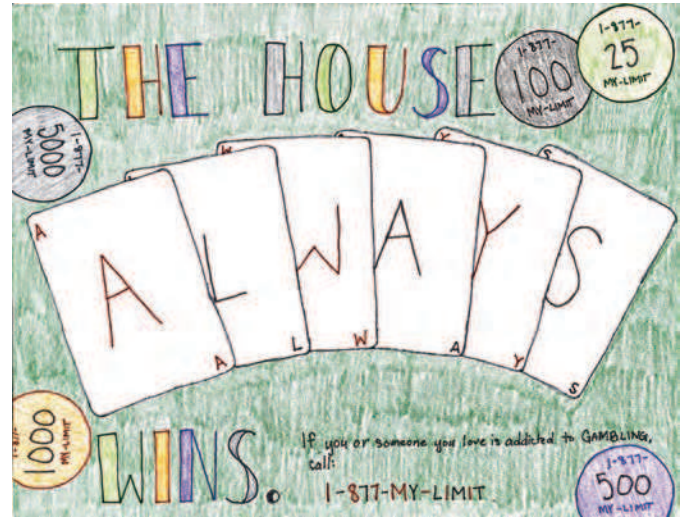
president of McNary's BSU. "It's good to have people that you can relate to and talk about social issues with."

"As an African-American woman, I don't hear a lot about other African-American women being accomplished, so it has been really reassuring to see and learn about like me and know that I can be accomplished to."

Club member Remy Olson also added: "It was nice to see that there were other students just like at the school."

As the school year comes to a close, Roberson is preparing for the BSU's around the district to pick up some momentum next year.

"We're still growing, but in time, I think of all our BSU's will be really big," he said.



## Students use art to take stand against gambling

Hundreds of artists from 11 Oregon counties participated in the Oregon Health Authority's statewide art contest for middle school students. Designs from three Marion County youth were chosen among the top 12 to be featured in the 2020 Problem Gambling Awareness Calendar.

Walea Tombleson, a seventh grade student from Claggett Creek Middle School, was awarded the top state prize and will see her work featured on the cover of the calendar. Artwork from seventh grade students Kelsey Schauer from Whiteaker Middle School and McKenna Morales from Waldo Middle School in Salem will be featured in the calendar as well.

Marion County awarded prizes for the top five entries that moved on to the state contest and included their artwork on awareness posters. These included the three state award winners, as well as Jarrod Kohler, Mar-



TOP: Art by Walea Tombleson. ABOVE: Art by Kelsey Schauer.

ion County's top prize winner, from Whiteaker Middle School and Emmanuel Sandoval from Mt. Angel Middle School.

Printing and distribution of the 2020 calendar is scheduled for fall 2019. For more information about problem gambling prevention or to request a free calendar or awareness poster, contact Michael Keuler, Marion County Health & Human Services at 503-576-2867.

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