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McNary junior to be featured in 45th Parallel Film Festival

By MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

Braeden Olheiser has only been interested in filmmaking for a couple of years, but despite his inexperience, the 16-year-old McNary High student is already getting recognized for his skills.

Olheiser's short film, *Tandem Thoughts*, has been nominated for an award for best youth film and best narrative and storytelling at the 45th Parallel Film Festival, which takes place at Salem Cinema on Saturday, Oct. 19.

"The fact that this is getting recognized at all is an achievement," Olheiser said. "It was really gratifying when I found out I was nominated. It feels like all my hard work is finally paying off."

Tandem Thoughts, which is just under five minutes in runtime, is a drama about a guy who just graduated from high school and is moving to Spain. But during his going-away party, his ex-girlfriend shows up to try and re-kindle the relationship.

"The entire movie is the conflict and dialogue between these two people who are at battle with each other on what they should do," Olheiser said.

Olheiser first got into filmmaking after taking a video production class from former McNary media production teacher Jason Heimerdinger — who is now in his first year teaching at San Luis Obispo High School in California.

"The second I got the camera, I started hogging it to be honest. Once I got a touch of actual video production, I just had to keep going," Olheiser said.

During his freshman and

sophomore years, Olheiser spent time behind the camera making a variety of different short videos that featured different clubs and events at McNary. Over time, he began to grow his skill-set.

"As an aspiring filmmaker, Braeden was constantly trying to improve his storytelling and cinematography," Heimerdinger said. "He appreciates technical details and would often go the extra mile to get a shot."

When Olheiser got the chance to borrow Heimerdinger's video equipment this summer, he knew that he had to take advantage.

"I've done two years of video production and I need to do something with it," Olheiser said.

Generally, one of the most difficult parts of the filmmaking process is writing the script. Olheiser, however, wrote this 10-page script in just one night over the summer, using a green-apple flavored Bang Energy Drink as his fuel.

He then cast McNary students Makayla Hadley and Jonathan Echavarria as the two lead characters.

"I don't think it was the quality of the script that they were excited about, I think they were just excited about this other avenue of acting because there aren't a lot of opportunities in videos here at McNary," Olheiser said.

After three days of filming and almost 20 hours editing, the short film starting running on Capitol Community Television (CCTV) in September.

"I had full creative control over what was happening and I had also had help from peo-



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Above: Braeden Olheiser with actor Jonathan Echavarria on set. RIGHT: Olheiser oversees audition for his next film.

ple that I trusted who are very talented people who can give me really good input. I fell in love with that process," Olheiser said.

One of Olheiser's biggest inspirations is Zeek Earl, a 2006 graduate of McNary and another one of Heimerdinger's former students.

Along with his friend, Chris Caldwell, Earl formed the production company Shep Films. In 2018, the duo co-wrote and co-directed their first feature film called *Prospect*, a critically-acclaimed science-fiction film.

"(Earl) came from the same place that I did and now he's making out big. He is one inspiration for what I do today,"

two characters preparing to leave high school and enter the real world.

Even though his first film is up for an award, Olheiser is much more confident in his ability to put out an even better piece of work this time around.

"The driving theme behind the film is to not look back," Olheiser said. "I'm very excited about it because I spent a lot more time on it than my first film. I'm much more confident in the outcome because I really got to plan it. I know a little bit more of what I'm doing."

Olheiser has a constant drive for self-improvement when it comes to his films, which he believes will help him in the long run.

"At the end of the day, I still probably won't be satisfied, which is why I will keep moving forward. I want to chase that dream and make something worthwhile," Olheiser said.

Heimerdinger added: "Braeden's technical skills will make him an experienced young engineer or tech right out of school." His networking and ability to satisfy a client will also take him a long way. It's a tough industry to break in to, but I would like to have him on my side after he's had more filmmaking experiences."

Students promote mental health

By BROOKLYN FLINT
Of the Keizertimes

On Monday, Oct. 7, South Salem High School held a student-led presentation for the public launch of Live To Tell.

The event had many speakers from the community who shared their hopes and plans for the future of the organization and their past experience with mental health issues and lack of support.

Live To Tell is a non-profit suicide prevention organization led by Eric Martz, a senior at South Salem High School. The organization works to fund and organize student-led clubs in Salem-Keizer high schools that spread awareness for suicide prevention and mental health.

Live To Tell provides clubs structure, funding, and ideas for how to get involved in their school community to destigmatize the topic and change the school culture surrounding mental health. In addition, Live To Tell will work to advocate for students' interests at the administrative and legislative level as school policies are being written and bills are being passed to address mental health concerns in the school district and in the state.

If you are interested in helping the organization and making a donation, visit the website at livetotellnonprofit.org or the group's Instagram (@livetotellnonprofit) and its Facebook page (Live To Tell).

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