

KeizerCommunity

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ABOVE: Members of the McNary High School Latino Club gathered with the teachers and mentors to receive their graduation sashes Saturday, May 23. BELOW: Emely Medina (left), who helped mask-timing the whole event, puts on her sash.

Can't stop, won't stop

Despite a pandemic cancelling or postponing most of the milestones graduates partake in, the advisors to the McNary High School Latino Club didn't miss a chance to mark the moment for its graduates.

The senior members of the club gathered at Dutch Bros. on River Road North Saturday, May 23, to receive the sashes they will, we hope, wear at a graduation ceremony in August.



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CCMS counselors focus on student mental health as pandemic lingers

BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided unique circumstances across the country for students and their parents.

Fortunately the counselors at Claggett Creek Middle School have been collaborating over the past two months to help parents and students cope with their stress.

Ashley Delarosa, Amy Aebi and Kenzi Mozejeko have prided themselves on how to be virtual counselors due to their inability to meet with their students in person.

Thanks to the counseling support system they helped create — which can be accessed on the Claggett Creek website — Delarosa, Aebi and Mozejeko have been in contact with hundreds of students over the last two months.

"Ashley, Amy and Kenzie have been stepping up in a big way to support our students and families. In addition to following up with students and families in need that are identified by our engagement team, our counselors collaborated with our engagement team to design an online counseling support system and, in the first week alone, helped 96 CCMS students who accessed their system to request counseling support," Claggett Creek principal Aaron Persons said.

Meeting students and their individual needs takes up at least 80 percent of a typical school year for the counselors at Claggett Creek. That continues to be the priority during virtual counseling as Aebi, Delarosa and Mozejeko strive to carry

out their primary focus during this time: care and connection.

"We have had to be creative in how best to communicate with students and families. Some prefer phone calls, while others may like to speak with us in an email. For some students and families, this is an especially stressful time," Aebi said. "Along with having to navigate a new way to access school, they may be feeling worried about the health of family members, loss of employment, grief at cancelled activities and feelings of loneliness or boredom. Our goal is to be as accessible as possible to our students, supporting both their academic and social/emotional needs in whatever way works best for them."

To best connect with students, the counseling team created a Google classroom to allow kids to speak with a counselor and are also in communication with teachers about any concerns that students or parents might have.

Mozejeko also noted that "our district counseling team has a general site for families and students to reach out with questions or concerns and we each take district office hours, in addition to our school office hours."

Although virtual counseling has been incredibly productive at Claggett Creek thus far, the

struggle of not having in-person connection with students has presented its challenges.

"Not being able to meet with students can be difficult. Body language, tone and other non-verbal communication forms are often lost in virtual communication," Delarosa said. "Confidentiality is also a concern. In a virtual environment, we want to make sure students feel safe and confident that their information remains confidential. When we are unable to meet with students face to face in a controlled environment, we want to take extra precautions to ensure student safety and confidentiality."

However, the virtual communication has brought on many positive aspects as well, including instances where Aebi, Delarosa and Mozejeko have learned from their students.

"Engaging students and families virtually has been new and different. We all

had the challenge to learn new virtual tools very fast and we are continually impressed by our students and their tech skills. Many students have helped teach us the best ways to communicate in this new virtual world," Delarosa said.



Volunteers needed

The City of Keizer is looking for volunteers to serve on the following committees and boards, including a new board that will review the city charter for revision and updates:

- Public Art Commission (two vacancies) – meets the third Tuesday of every other month beginning each January to discuss matters and make decisions pertaining to Keizer public art projects.
- Keizer Points of Interest (one vacancy) – meets the fourth Thursday of each month at 6 p.m. to identify and memorialize points of interest.
- Youth liaison and pages – teens can apply to be youth voices on many of the city's committees. Meeting times depend on assignment.

Applications are available on www.keizer.org or in person at the Keizer Civic Center, 930 Chemawa Road N.E. Applications are due by Wednesday, June 10, at 5 p.m. to be considered during the June 18 meeting of the Volunteer Coordinating Committee.

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