

boys and girls teams last season. While McNary has just under two dozen student-athletes out for the team this year — which is still fairly low — Buffoni is hoping to convince more kids to join the team before the conclusion of the season.

“When there are young kids out, they will usually bring more with them. I have told them to come to practice every day and bring a friend because we will be taking kids until the end of the year,” Buffoni said. “I am hoping by the end of the year that we may be able to get to 30 or 40 and then grow from there.”

Buffoni grew up on the East Coast and was a self-proclaimed football, basketball and baseball guy. But he started to learn more running from his college roommate, who was a decathlete.

After receiving his Masters degree at Slippery Rock University in 1987, Buffoni received his first job teaching physical education at a high school in New York, where he also coached football and track and field.

While coaching in New York, Buffoni noticed that he wasn't getting a lot of distance runners for the track team, which is why he eventually elected to take on coaching cross country.

“When I was doing track, I would see that we had no distance runners, and I would complain to the cross country coach about not getting me any distance runners. Then finally, I said to myself that if I wanted distance runners, I would have to develop them myself,” Buffoni said.

After coaching in New York for four years, Buffoni moved to Massachusetts, where he spent 25 years teaching P.E. and 16 years as a high school cross country coach before moving to Arizona with the plan of retiring.

But late last year, Buffoni and his wife, Michelle, made the move up north to Oregon, moving to Albany last fall, then to Eugene in May to be closer to Michelle's family.

Upon moving to Oregon, it didn't take long for Buffoni to get back into teaching as he accepted a P.E position at Four Corners Elementary last fall before receiving the McNary cross country position.

Despite being new to the area, Buffoni quickly became fond of Oregon.

“We have been coming up, visiting, and going to Duck games for a while now,” Buffoni said. “I really like it up here and I really enjoy it over at Four Corners.”

As a teacher and coach, Buffoni prides himself on forming a relationship with students and athletes, which is how he is able to get more kids to come out and try their hand at cross country.

“I always ask for cafeteria duty at the high school so I could see the kids who are sitting by themselves and encourage them to come out and try to run. Everyone knows the great athletes, it's the sleepers that really help your team, especially with cross country,” Buffoni said. “It's not for everyone. But I tell kids that we're still going to be friends tomorrow if they come out and say 'coach, this isn't for me.' I just want kids to give it a try.”

In his first season at McNary, Buffoni isn't concerned with winning, but instead, making sure his kids are striving for personal improvement every day.

“Everyone is starting at a much different level. My goal for every kid is to improve, which will happen if they put the work in. My hope is for them to see that improvement and then fall in love with the sport and with running. Anything that motivates them to do it life-long is a win for me,” Buffoni said. “It's really about being positive with it. I don't really stress about winning. Of course, when I see who can stick with the front group, I'm thinking how we can win meets. But the reality is that the last kid in the race gets just as much cheering as the first kid in the race.”

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Cat of the Week

Name: SOPHIE
Age: 5

HISTORY: Sophie is a domestic long hair Calico. She is on dietary food.

PREFERRED HOME: This cat is very playful and talkative. She doesn't do well with little kids or other pets.



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