



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Eighth-graders Jayden Ray, from left, and Kaylee Young anchor a news broadcast as Kelsie Schaefer, Daytona Tracy and Annalise Wright help on the production side as part of the ALTV video production class Wednesday at Armand Larive Middle School in Hermiston.

Live, from Hermiston, it's

ALTV



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Armand Larive seventh-grader Joana Jimenez operates a camera while an ALTV crew broadcasts a seventh-grade volleyball game recently in Hermiston.

Armand Larive Television offers experience to budding journalists

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

Every morning at Armand Larive Middle School a group of aspiring news anchors and sports commentators dim the lights in room 304 and ask for quiet on the set.

Their live broadcasts of the school's morning announcements are a training ground for Armand Larive Television, which features regular online news segments about the school and livestreamed courtside sports commentary.

On a recent Wednesday morning two eighth graders were taking their turn in front of the camera while other students adjusted the lighting, operated the video equipment, ran the slideshow of graphics behind the anchors and kept an eye on the sound levels.

"Good morning Bullpups, it's spirit week and today is tie dye day," Herlinda Angel said before launching into a back-and-forth report of the weather, the lunch menu and upcoming activities.

"Sometimes you feel like you're gonna mess up," she said afterward. "If you do you just have to go with it ... and try to fix it."

Angel serves as one of ALTV's directors, which includes organizing reporters, helping come up with story ideas during newsroom meetings and making sure all news segments are done by deadline.

In addition to the live morning announcements and longer, edited news segments posted online, the ALTV team also produces livestreamed broadcasts of middle school sports games. A volleyball game might get 30 to 40 live viewers, while AAU basketball tournaments can get hundreds.

Eighth grader Tanner Bales, one of the channel's sports anchors, often ends up coming in before school to help set up the morning announcements and staying after school to commentate games. He said he



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

ALTV teacher Rob Doherty, center right, makes an adjustment to an audio level as Abigail Findley, Courtney Picard and Hannah Melville carry on with their broadcast at a volleyball game recently at Armand Larive Middle School in Hermiston.



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Eighth-graders Jayden Ray, left, and Kaylee Young anchor a news broadcast as seen through the monitor of a video camera Wednesday in the ALTV studio at Armand Larive Middle School in Hermiston.

follows a script at the beginning of the sports broadcasts, but doesn't find it too difficult to do off-the-cuff commentary during the game itself.

"I know a lot about sports, so I know what to talk about," he said.

Of course, there are still learning moments.

"Once we thought we had cut the mics but we hadn't pushed the right button, so you could hear what we were saying in the background," he said.

Fortunately the crew didn't say anything embarrassing, he said, but it was still a mistake they have made sure not to repeat.

Daytona Tracy said she prefers being in front of the camera.

"I'm usually anchoring or something that involves talking," she said. "I like to talk a lot. I have a good speaking voice and I'm usually quick on my feet to think of something to say."

She said she has learned a lot about good interviewing techniques, including asking questions that people can "ramble on about" instead of answering just yes or no.

"The hardest part is to get answers," she said. "It's hard to make it make sense if they don't put it into self-sustaining answers that you can put into a clip."

Some students prefer to stay behind the scenes. Avery Treadwell is a video editor and she said it's fun to watch all the raw footage that comes in. Kaylee Young, ALTV's producer, said she enjoys her leadership role but also finds it stressful during times like the incident last year where the crew was still editing three days' worth of video 20 minutes before a broadcast.

"It's a lot of stress because you feel like it's all on you," she said.

Several of the students said they're interested in doing some sort of journalism or filmmaking for a career, especially after a visit last year from KNDO/KNDU news anchor Tracci Dial during a career day.

Teacher Rob Doherty said many video production programs for middle schools and high schools just focus on filmmaking techniques, but he emphasizes journalistic principles to his students, too. During sports broadcasts, for example, they're not allowed to show favoritism to Armand Larive teams.

"They don't just hook up the camera and let it run," he said. "They have to learn to be fair to both sides. We actually get a lot of nice compliments from the opposite teams' viewers."

ALTV started as a closed-circuit announcement broadcast system in the old Armand Larive building in the 1990s, before the school moved to a new building and the old equipment failed. Doherty brought it back in 2012 with just a camera and a microphone, and today it has grown into a full television studio and an affiliate of the Student Television Network. ALTV broadcasts more than 100 hours of live programming each year.

Last year the studio traveled to the national Student Television Network conference and competed against middle schools from around the country. They came away with third place. During spring break the group will travel to Anaheim, California, to compete again.

"These are kids I can trust," Doherty said. "I can send them out with a camera and crew, and for things like the live-streaming with sports, they pretty much run it on their own."

To watch previous ALTV videos or livestream games, visit corp.esenetworks.com/oregon.

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