

HEPPNER

Student wins award for essay on making a better world

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

If there is a “good citizen-ship” expert in Heppner, it might be Rylee Palmer.

The Heppner Elementary School student, 10, recently won first place in a national contest about citizenship.

“When you’re a good citizen, you can help others,” she said. “Helping others and helping the earth is good so we can live in a better place.”

The “Character Counts!” essay contest is hosted each year by the National Association for Family and Community Education for fourth graders across the country. Rylee won the local contest, then the state one, and then learned on the last day of school she had won first place at the national level, too.

In her short essay, she wrote that being a good citizen means not just helping yourself, but your friends, family and community.

“Look at the world around you,” she wrote. “You could probably look at the first thing you saw and help it.”

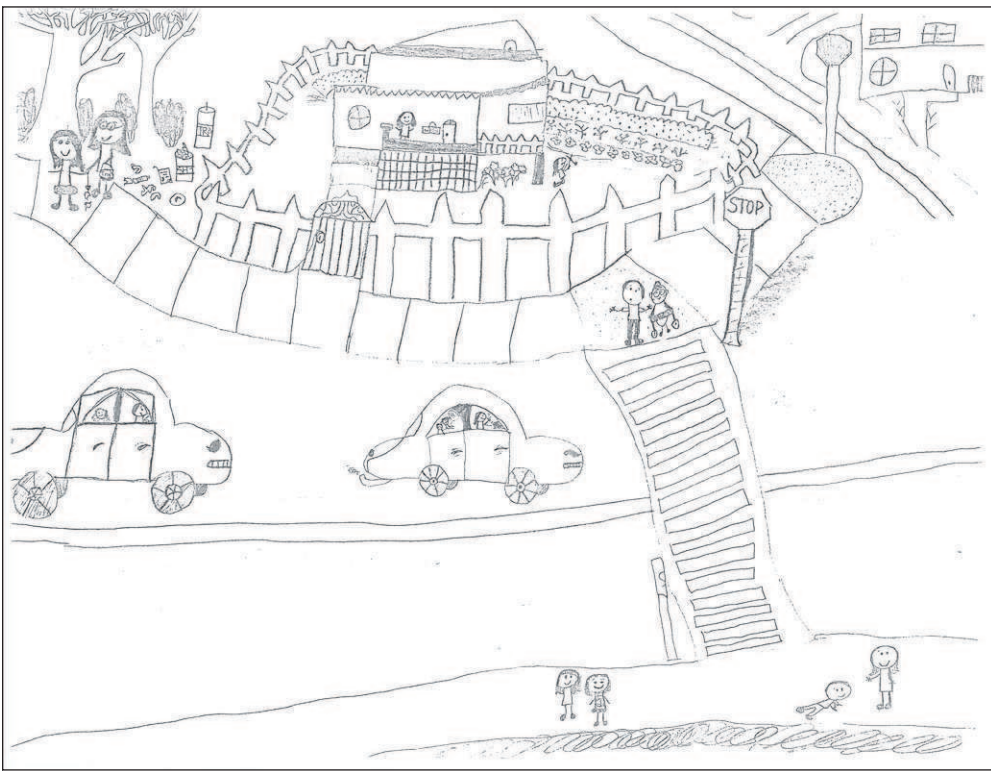
Along with her essay,

Citizenship

Being a good citizen doesn’t just mean you help yourself, it also means you help your friends, family and community. Look at the world around you. You could probably look at the first thing you saw and help it. Helping clean the environment is an easy way of being a good citizen. Helping the elderly is a

the next step in becoming a good citizen. But, the most important thing about being a good citizen is that you are a friend. In my picture, there are friends playing, people picking up trash and someone helping the elderly.

Rylee Palmer
Mrs. Gibbs
Heppner Elementary
4th Grade



Courtesy photo

Rylee Palmer’s drawing and essay about citizenship earned her first place in a national “Character Counts!” contest.

assembly, and her work is displayed at Murray’s Drug in Heppner.

Rylee said she enjoys writing and drawing and exploring with her bulldog Delilah. One of her favorite things to draw is a girl in the forest with her dog. She said she is also working on

a longer story about a girl with special powers trying to escape her stepmother and meeting new friends along the way.

As she prepares to watch fireworks with her family this week to celebrate the Fourth of July, she said good citizenship is an important

part of living in America.

“It’s showing that you are proud, and you want to make it so other people can be proud with you that it’s a good place to live,” she said.

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Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Democratic Congressional candidate Jamie McLeod-Skinner stops to chats with a vendor at a recent Pendleton Farmers Market. She logged around 40,000 miles in her Jeep to campaign for the primary election in Oregon’s massive Second Congressional District.

CANDIDATE: Challenging Greg Walden

Continued from 1A

at a table upstairs in the loft of the Hamley Cafe in Pendleton, nursing a cup of something caffeinated. She admitted she’d been up late giving her dog a tomato juice bath after he tangled with a skunk. She settled back and pondered a question about the path leading to her candidacy, took a sip and got started. There was a lot to tell.

McLeod-Skinner spent her early life in Wisconsin, the daughter of a single mom who drove school bus and picked apples to make ends meet. When McLeod-Skinner was nine, her mom took a teaching job in the East African country of Tanzania. The little girl attended a school where the kids spoke English in class and Swahili at recess. When Idi Amin invaded Tanzania two years later, her mother sent her to a boarding school in Kenya for her safety. There McLeod-Skinner learned how to play soccer.

“Girls didn’t really play soccer, but because I was a white kid, I was an anomaly anyway,” she said. “I was not only the only white kid on the team, I was the only girl.”

She carried that skill back to the states. At Ashland High School, she captained her soccer team.

Later, McLeod-Skinner earned a degree in engineering, a master’s in regional planning and a law degree that focused on water law. She designed water systems in rural Kosovo. She worked as a city planner in Silicon Valley. In California, she got her first taste of public office as a member of the Santa Clara City Council.

Later, she took a job as the eighth city manager of Phoenix, Oregon, in seven years.

She said she found out

why after she got there and “looked under the hood,” where she discovered “fiscal mismanagement and inappropriate use of funds.”

“Those were gut-check moments,” she said. “I had the choice of keeping quiet or losing my job,” she said. Soon after, she was fired.

These days, based at the Crooked River Ranch in Jefferson County, she spends most of her time driving around the district in her Jeep and sleeping in a teardrop trailer that she hauls behind it. Her Doberman rides shotgun. Sometimes she’s joined by her wife Cassandra Skinner, executive director of the Oregon Board of Chiropractic Examiners, and her four stepchildren.

McLeod-Skinner said she didn’t start out wanting to run for the House seat. When her dissatisfaction with Walden grew, however, she got involved.

“He led the attack on health care. Our district, I think it would have been the hardest hit in the entire country and he still had the hubris to do that. I was at a town hall in Medford last spring. He came in and was asked specifically about pre-existing conditions. He said, ‘Absolutely I will protect pre-existing conditions.’ The next week, he went back and helped author the bill that cut out pre-existing conditions.”

She believes Walden has lost touch with his constituents, many of whom are just trying to survive financially.

“I really think if you don’t get that, you aren’t qualified to lead this district,” she said. “It’s a visceral thing, it’s a fear thing. People are hurting. People are scared. People want to take care of their kids.”

She says she spends her days chatting with people about what is important to them. She finds them at Kiwanis meetings, pow-

wows and county fairs. They converse about health care, trade tariffs, water and scores of other subjects. She prides herself on talking to people wearing bright red “Make America Great Again” hats and finding common ground.

“You end up talking about your kids or family issues,” she said. “You have to go a couple of layers down. We all are struggling and concerned with so many of the same things.”

Once when she couldn’t connect, she asked, “What do you hate most about Democrats?” The man, momentarily shocked, told her.

“At the end of it, he said, ‘I’ve never been able to talk to a Democrat cause all they want to do is argue with you,’” McLeod-Skinner said.

“This guy just needed someone to hear him out and then we had a fabulous conversation.” She said she doesn’t worry about being judged for being gay. When friends in Ashland predicted that people in Eastern Oregon wouldn’t vote for her because she is homosexual, she shook her head.

“I joke that I’m not afraid to tell people in Eastern Oregon that I’m gay, but I’m a bit nervous about telling people in Ashland that I listen to country music,” she said.

She sees the district not as insurmountably red, but rather purple.

Forty percent are non-affiliated and many Democrats and Republicans are tired of the polarization.

“Very few people fit into those narrow silos on either side,” she said. “Who can bridge that? Who can get us beyond that political rhetoric? If we talk red versus blue, that language is missing the mark.”

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Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Burger King manager Justin Hollendaugh uses a garden hose while attempting to stave off flames as they approach his restaurant Monday off of Southwest Hailey Avenue in Pendleton.

FIRE: Residents helped save property

Continued from 1A

Some staff members poured water around the property to protect it, but employees otherwise returned home during the hour Burger King was closed or waited it out at the nearby Sinclair gas station.

The fire scarred much of the hillside separating Burger King and the residential area above it, including the Blue Mountain Village Apartments.

Tenants Cody Brumley and Khamaron Scott were sitting at a table overlooking the northern expanse of Pendleton, but they were forced to retreat away from the hill when the fire got serious.

Brumley and Scott helped hose down the perimeter of the apartment complex, a part of

a wider effort from residents to keep the property protected.

“Ain’t nothing like a big fire to bring people together,” Brumley said.

Anthony Hendershot said he and about 15 other neighbors at Vista Village, 228 S.W. 28th Drive, dug multiple fire lines for about 30 minutes until crews arrived.

“The whole community came out to save property,” he said.

Charlotte Roager and her husband were volunteering at their church when her daughter called from Lincoln City and said she saw online that a fire was close to their Southwest Goodwin home.

“We just stayed there and prayed,” she said.

They were concerned about their dog and their

African gray parrot, but the fire was already extinguished upon their return.

“The parrot had a lot to stay when we got home,” she said.

As Roager took pictures of the charred hillside, many of her neighbors emerged from their homes in the midday sun to turn on their lawn sprinklers or water their plants as a safeguard against a stray ember or spark.

Teri Atkins, who lives across from the Roagers, has lived in her house for 21 years and said fires on the hill are usually an annual occurrence but this is the worst she’s seen.

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Dr. Libby is originally from Hilton Head, South Carolina and graduated from Furman University in Greenville, SC. She attended medical school at the University Of South Carolina School Of Medicine, and completed her residency in Family Medicine at the University of Alabama, Huntsville. She then spent three years at Western Family Care/Lander Medical Clinic in Riverton, Wyoming. Dr. Libby is Board Certified, American Board of Family Medicine. She has a passion for rural medicine and looks forward to living in Pendleton with her husband Brandon and daughter Sophie Belle.

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