

Students advance in basketball contest

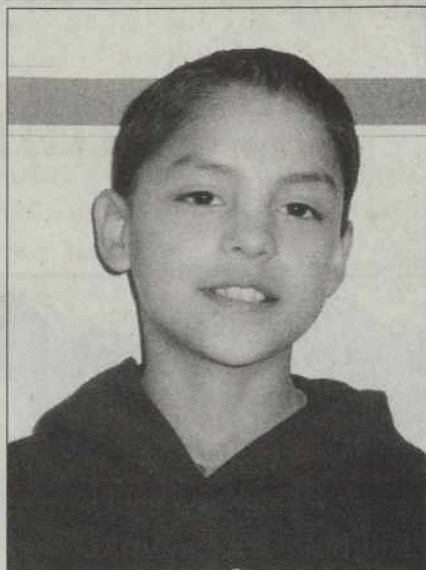
By Brian Mortensen
Spilyay Tymoo

If Jalen Graybael should become a Madras White Buffalo basketball player in the future, he might not be the player opposing teams would want to foul in the last minute of a game.

Graybael, 9, a fourth-grader at Warm Springs Elementary, is competing in the Elks Hoop Shoot, a free throw-shooting competition sponsored nationally by the Fraternal Order of Elks.

Graybael made 18 of 25 free throws, or 72 percent, at a regional competition in Burns Feb. 3 to move on to the state competition in McMinnville Saturday. If he places well there, he would move on to West Regional competition in Portland March 4.

Graybael advanced to the competition in Burns by hitting 18 of 25 in the opening round competition in Madras last month.



Jalen Graybael



Teneasha Adams

Another Warm Springs student, Teneasha Adams, qualified to advance to the regional competition in Burns but did not compete there. Adams, 10, is a fifth-grader, and she made 10 of her 25 free throws at the Madras competition.

Graybael, the son of Brent and Rosa Graybael, said basketball is his favorite sport, and he has been playing since he was six.

He said he bounces the bas-

ketball about four times or less when he steps up to the foul line.

He said he practices his free throw shooting both at the Warm Springs Elementary gym and at home.

Adams said she practices at home and aspires to play for the Madras White Buffalos, as her sister, junior Shirelle Adams, does this year.

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Indian charter school curbs dropout rate

MISSION, Ore. (AP) - Upon first glance, it looks like a typical public school classroom. A dozen teenage students lean over their desks and ponder test questions while their teacher, Mary Green, grades papers at her desk.

Look closer and you notice some intriguing differences.

President Bush smiles from a poster on the wall, not unusual until you read the text below - "wanichi Push" - which is President Bush in the Umatilla Indian language.

The word joins a host of other vocabulary words including "yulama" (cheerleaders) and "tipawalukwilwilama" (football team).

Nearby, Syreeta Thompson raises her head from her paper as the baby in a carrier at her feet starts crying. Syreeta picks up the infant, rummages for a bottle and starts feeding it.

The baby is actually a life-size doll that cries periodically to indicate when she's stressed.

Syreeta must figure out what's wrong and respond by feeding, diapering or rocking her.

While the program is common in high schools to impress upon students how much is involved in caring for infants, this doll is a little different than the typical model. It's American Indian.

Outside the classroom, in the hallway, vivid posters recount historical events - not the American Revolution or the Battle of the Bulge, rather the Battle of Little Bighorn, the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and other events especially important in American Indian circles.

The Nixyaawii Charter School emphasizes American Indian language and culture. Students study native tongues, choosing to learn either Nez Perce, Walla Walla or Cayuse dialects.

Most of the school's 65 students are American Indian.

Chartered in July 2004, the school sought to turn around a horrendously high dropout rate among American Indian students and to bring native languages and culture back from the brink.

Principal Annie Tester, a multi-tasker extraordinaire, scrambled to pull a curriculum together and develop a plan of operation before the school's doors opened.

"There was nothing in place," she said, remembering that she

went without pay for two months because the school had no one to take care of the books. "It's pretty daunting to open up a new school."

Over time, the school invented itself. Tester watched with fascination as the year progressed, systems were put in place and students responded to the school's unique curriculum.

By the end of Nixyaawii's maiden year, Tester was encouraged. Student dropout rates were down, grades were up and attendance statistics showed radical improvement.

Tester says attendance is key. "We call. We pick them up," she said. "They don't fall through the cracks."

Graduation was an emotional affair. Three chiefs led a procession of six graduates into the gym, which was filled to capacity. Many in the audience brushed tears away as they listened to each student speak.

"You could feel the pride," Tester said. "The walls of the gym expanded with the pride."

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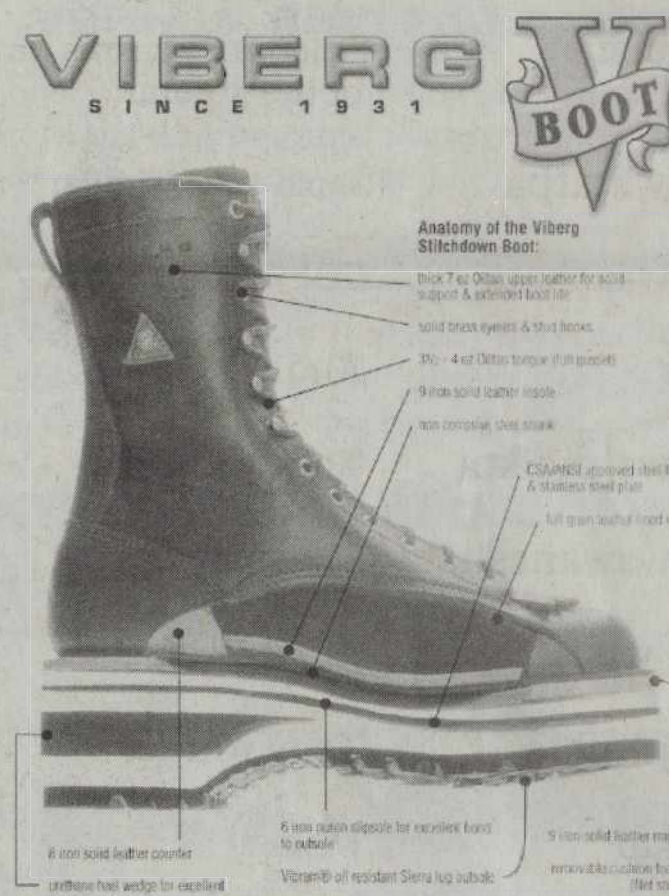
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