

# SCHOOL ZONE

A Monthly Newsletter for the Siuslaw and Mapleton Schools and Florence Community PTA

## Journey onto the Magical Mystery Bus

Twilight Learning Center's bus program sends Siuslaw Elementary students on weekly field trips to area businesses

By CHANTELE MEYER  
Siuslaw News

Children participating in Siuslaw Elementary School's Twilight Learning Center after school get a little bit of mystery included in their weekly schedule. Once a week, about a dozen students travel on a Magical Mystery Bus Tour. This is besides the usual homework, meal and enrichment activities provided by Twilight.

Jim Grano, a semi-retired volunteer with a bus-certification, said, "I proposed that once a week I take 13 students, because that's what fits in the activity bus with one other adult, on a trip every Wednesday. The idea is students sign up Monday, not knowing where they're going."

Hence the "mystery" for the students.

Students in grades three to five sign up Monday or Tuesday for the Wednesday field trip, which takes around two hours.



Students from Twilight Learning Center listen to Petty Officer Alan Veach at the US Coast Guard Siuslaw River Station.

"We try to make the trips hands on as much as possible,"

Grano said. "Which is, I'm finding out, easier for them after a full day of school than it is for them to listen to different people giving them information."

After the trip, students complete a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) response and eat dinner with the rest of the Twilight students.

On Wednesday, Feb. 4, seven students, ages 8 to 11, went to the US Coast Guard Station off Rhododendron Drive with Grano and Twilight teacher Ben Wells.

Petty Officer Alan Veach led the Coast Guard tour.

"I've been in the Coast Guard for 12 years," Veach said. "I'm a boatswain's mate, first class. I drive boats. Well, on a good day I drive boats. On a bad day I do paperwork."

"What would they have to do, Alan, to get into the Coast Guard?" Grano asked.

This is one of the most important parts of the field trip for Grano.

"One of the goals is to present students with careers that they may not know about and how to get there. We always talk to the hosts about that," he said.

Veach answered, "There are two career paths you can take. You could enlist in the Coast Guard, which means you would be an enlisted person, a petty officer like myself, or you could go to the academy or get a commission as an officer. To enlist, you have to complete high school or get your GED, be able to read at an eighth grade level, pass some physical exams and go to an eight-week long boot camp."

"I really like it," he said. "In a lot of ways, it's just like any other job with good days and bad days, but the good days are really good. It's a nice feeling

to go out and help people."

After this, Veach asked the students a question of his own. "Who wants to go on a boat?"

Madyson, 9, said, "I want to go, I want to go! It looks so big!"

"I have been on a boat before," said Cannon, 10.

Another student said, "I've never been on a boat!"

"I would be on a boat if I got to go to Cub Scouts like Cannon!" said Alora, 9.

"Well we'll get you on one today," Veach said.

Veach led the tour onto a 47-foot motor lifeboat and then onto the much smaller 25-foot defender class boat. Students got to visit the engine room, climb into the pilot chairs, and even hear an example of an alarm onboard.

The tour ended near the Coast Guard's bell.

"I would like to thank you for asking such thoughtful questions," Veach said. "You each asked very perceptive questions. Thank you for pay-

ing attention and listening and not touching stuff. If every tour was like this, I would want to give tours a lot more often."

"You're welcome!" the students yelled in unison.

The Magical Mystery Bus Tours also help students learn more about their community.

"Kids tend to prejudge a place," Grano said. "If they're going to the police station, they say, 'I've been there before' or 'I don't like police, I'm not going.' When they don't know where they're going, they just sign up because they want to go on the field trip and then we surprise them with where we go and how good it is."

Grano and Twilight tutors have taken students to the Florence Police Department, Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue, the Sea Lion Caves, Siuslaw Public Library and PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Medical Center.

Fire Marshal Sean Barrett guided the students.

"Students broke into four or five groups and climbed through the cab of the engine, they opened doors and compartments. They just got to run and scramble," Grano said.

Barrett said, "I loved doing it. It was my favorite thing. I said to them, 'I shouldn't go around and tell you what I know. You should tell me what you know.'"

Youth Services Librarian Gayle Waiss also set up a scavenger hunt.

"Students learned all the stuff that the library has to offer. Which is amazing. ... It was tremendous, her effort," said Grano.

Grano was impressed by the graciousness of the tours' hosts.

"There were so many folks that the students met that were doing different things. The students learned they could do those jobs and help others in doing them," he said.

## MES All-Stars



Mapleton Elementary School had 41 students who were AVID All-Stars for the first semester. They were treated to a movie at City Lights Cinemas and ice cream at McDonalds. They would like to thank Michael Falter at City Lights Cinemas for hosting them and Thomas and his staff at McDonalds for making 45 ice cream cones in a short amount of time. —Submitted by Carrie McNeill

## Fifth grader sings anthem for Ducks



PHOTO COURTESY OF SCOTT VOLLMAR

Nyah Vollmar sings the national anthem Feb. 22 at the Oregon Ducks basketball game versus Utah in Eugene.

Nyah Vollmar, a fifth grader at Siuslaw Elementary School, sang the national anthem Feb. 22 at the University of Oregon men's basketball game at Matthew Knight Arena in Eugene in front of nearly 11,000 fans.

Vollmar, 10, is an active student in Children's Repertory of Oregon Workshops (CROW), a youth theater pro-

gram in Florence.

Her father, Scott, said CROW helped his daughter succeed in the televised performance.

"Without the experience, opportunities, training and guidance Nyah received through CROW over the last four years, she likely would have never been given this opportunity," he said.

## SIUSLAW THESPIANS TAKE STAGE

Newly chartered Siuslaw High School Thespian Troupe #8084 competed in its first ever acting competition at Redmond High School on Saturday, Feb. 7.

SHS competed in the Southern Region that included all thespian high schools in Oregon south of the 45th parallel.

Seven high schoolers competed: Ethan Owens, Tristin Reber, Brilee Sewall, Billy Jones, Anthony Perez, Katlin Meskimen and Mallory Varas.

Siuslaw students entered many categories such as monologues, comic duos (scenes), group pantomime and small group musical theater.

All competing members participated in the small group musical theater number, "La Vie Boheme," from the musical "Rent." The musical number played well for the judges, but SHS just missed the cut to qualify for state competition in April.

The students worked hard, and although they didn't qualify in any events this year, Siuslaw Thespians had fun and learned what to do next year.

Eddie Mielke, theater director, said, "I am very excited for



Seven Siuslaw High School Thespian Troupe members sang "La Vie Boheme" from the musical "Rent." At right, Billy Jones takes center stage.

our returning high school thespians who are determined to 'bring it' next year by rehearsing, rehearsing and rehearsing.

"Also, they will be able to share with new students what they've learned this year and apply that as we grow as a new competing thespian school in Oregon." —Submitted by Eddie Mielke, Siuslaw Schools' Theater Director

