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The students do, however, want it to be recognized that most seniors have had little to no interaction with the board members during their

time as Siuslaw High School students, and that it would make more sense for the teachers who guided them to have a larger part in the ceremony.

“I completely agree with

their reasoning for having the board members hand out diplomas,” Luevano said. “They do so much for our schools and should be thanked for it in some way. I’m not saying they shouldn’t be a part of the ceremony. Hannah and I do not want the board members to be totally erased — we just wish our teachers, the people we know personally, were more so involved.”

Along with the signatures, the seniors also plan to hand in a letter suggesting a compromise, in which the students would be handed their diplomas by a teacher. After receiving the diploma, they would shake hands with the school board members. That way, both parties could be involved in the event.

Siuslaw High School Principal Kerri Tatum, while admiring the student body’s

tenacity in their group effort, wants to make it clear that she and the superintendent have no intention in taking away this privilege from the school board members.

“Handing out diplomas at graduation is one of the only truly positive rewards for a board member,” Tatum said. “They have a very difficult, often thankless responsibility.”

She added that the graduation commencement ceremony is much more than just about high school or the seniors.

“(Graduation) is a community event that represents 13 years of work and dedication by students, parents, K-12 teachers, aides, custodians, bus drivers, secretaries, board members, maintenance staff, businesses and the community,” she said.

According to Tatum, the

Siuslaw School Board of Directors has chosen this as the only public acknowledgement for their service to their community. Tatum would like to continue to reserve them the right to hand students diplomas as a way of recognizing the hard work they do behind the scenes to ensure that the schools continue to run effectively.

There is an apparent divide between the view of the school administration and the actual students.

Another senior, Kaylynn Cannon, who openly supports the petition, hopes that its signatures can be a catalyst for change.

“I’m not sure if anything will actually come out of the petition, but it would be really meaningful if something did,” she noted. “I think there’s a major significance to having a teacher hand me my

diploma. In my experience, the teachers here are the ones who have helped shape me into who I am, not only as a student but as a person. It would feel more rewarding to have them hand me my diploma, rather than someone I’ve never even met.”

Even if the petition doesn’t change who will award diplomas this year, Cannon hopes that it will show Siuslaw teachers how much the students respect and care about them, and how much they wish they were more involved in the actual ceremony.

Luevano and Freudenthal plan to turn the signatures and letter in to the district office sometime this week.

The Siuslaw High School Class of 2019 Graduation is Friday, June 7, at 7 p.m.

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“I think we need to be aware,” Mann-Heintz said. “I see much more community awareness that this community wants to take care of its children. Obviously, the show of support indicates that it’s a big deal for the community.”

Awareness, and creating an environment of empathy for children in the community, is a key goal of 90by30, which has instituted multiple programs to help create a safe environment for children and families. While Mann-Heintz stated the organization has not done research into what the programs have done statistically to prevent or curtail child abuse, the feedback from programs has been encouraging. For example, the Roots of Empathy program has garnered positive results as it allows first-grade students in Siuslaw and Mapleton school districts to interact with newborn infants.

“We’ve heard overwhelming support and appreciation for the change in the dynamics of the first-grade classrooms,” Mann-Heintz said. “The young students are being kinder to each other, and they’re developing strategies for telling people how they feel. And problem solving.”

The program’s curriculum stresses the notion of accepting and appreciating peers, taking in the point of view of others and being kinder.

“Creating a kinder, gentler world,” Mann-Heintz summarized. “The feedback

from that has been very positive. We’re kind of wrapping up now. We’ll be having our last classroom baby visits in May and some of the babies are turning one, so it will be birthday celebrations as well.”

90by30 is currently searching for new babies to be in next year’s program, which begins in September. The babies should be between the ages of two and four months old to be eligible.

“So babies that are born now, between May and August, would be the right age for next year’s babies. We’re looking for five,” Mann-Heintz said.

The Welcome Baby Box Program, which 90by30 is doing in partnership with PeaceHealth, has delivered 31 baby boxes to new parents since the program’s inception two years ago.

“We have quite a number of young families that are having babies and a lot of times they aren’t far enough in their lives to have created a very stable economic base,” Mann-Heintz said. “The items that are in the boxes that give them a place for the baby to sleep and some clothes and some hygiene kits and information. All those things are very much appreciated, so we’re very happy with that.”

Regarding new programs, Mann-Heintz touted the new K(NO)W More Lane County website, which gives information on how “a connected child is a protected child,” and emphasized the importance of children not being left

alone to deal with abuse and neglect.

As far as future programs, 90by30 is focusing on middle-school-aged children.

“There are resources in the community to address older kids,” Mann-Heintz said. “But the thing left out is the middle school kids. And so, next year we have two programs that we’re going to be implementing.”

The first program is titled 40 Developmental Assets.

“It’s a kind of an inventory of interpersonal skills that all of us need,” said Mann-Heintz. “The research is very dramatic. If you have between 30 and 40 of these skills, then you only have a one percent chance of getting into big trouble, in terms of relationships and acting out against others or yourself. There are circumstances like being able to have an argument and then resolve it, being able to disagree with someone without overreacting, being able to make plans for something and then carry it out. It’s life skills which a lot of us could still develop. This particular program focuses directly on identifying and teaching those skills.”

According to 90by30, middle school is an optimal age to learn these skills, since the children are beginning to think about their relationships to others and discovering their independence, or lack thereof.

“It’s a perfect time for them to start doing introspection about their own feelings and

their own relationships and what things they need to know to be able to function normally and more true to themselves,” Mann-Heintz said.

The second program would involve foster-grandparents.

“There’s a lot of people in the community who are already retired and very interested in assisting with programs for young people,” Mann-Heintz said. “Our hope would be that we would be able to set it up so there would be children in the schools that need a listening ear and a caring adult in their lives, and that they would be able to get teamed up with someone who would be a safe supporter. There’s a lot of research that says it only takes one solid, strong relationship in one person’s life for them to overcome a whole lot of hurdles.”

90by30 is still looking at different program models that would best fit the West Lane community.

For more information on 90by30, visit 90by30.com or knowmorelanecounty.org, or attend a regional leadership team meeting, which meets once a month of the fourth Tuesday from 4 to 5:30 p.m. at the Siuslaw School District office, 2111 Oak St.

“Anybody who’s interested in knowing more, or just wants to come and listen or volunteer, or is interested in a particular area of service, we’re happy to talk to talk to them,” Mann-Heintz said.

Wildfire awareness month puts spotlight on making homes safe

May is Wildfire Awareness Month in Oregon, and federal, state and firefighting agencies are encouraging homeowners to make sure their homes are protected from wildfire.

The Oregon Department of Forestry, Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal and Keep Oregon Green, in collaboration with Oregon forest protective associations, the Office of Emergency Management and federal wildland agencies, are taking this opportunity to promote defensible space around homes before fire strikes this summer.

“The roof is the most critical

part of the house when it comes to wildfire protection,” says Oregon State Fire Marshal Jim Walker. “Embers can collect and ignite on the roof, in gutters and enter unscreened openings around the house. Although non-combustible roofing material is preferred, regardless of the construction, keep roofs, gutters and eaves clear of all leaves, pine needles and other flammable debris.”

To reduce the risk, fire officials suggest removing dead vegetation a minimum of 30 feet around your house and other structures. In most cases, trees and healthy plants do

not need to be removed. However, trees should be pruned and grass kept short and green to keep fire on the ground and more manageable by fire crews. Maintain a five-foot fire-free area closest to the home using nonflammable landscaping material and fire resistant plants.

“Defensible space is a property’s first line of defense against wildfire,” says Oregon Department of Forestry Fire Prevention Coordinator Tom Fields. “Creating and maintaining defensible space around homes can improve your property’s likelihood of

surviving a wildfire. Having defensible space also makes it safer for firefighters who may have to defend someone’s home.”

Homeowners should also consider access issues for large fire trucks. Long driveways should be at least 12 feet wide, have 10 feet of vegetation clearance from the centerline out, and about 14 feet overhead. Large vehicle turnaround areas are critical for your safety as well as firefighter safety.

Should a fire occur near a community, Oregon Office of Emergency Management Director Andrew Phelps encourages residents to be prepared if an evacuation is necessary.

“Wildfires can come without warning and move quickly, so residents need to prepare now in case they have to leave their home,” Phelps said. “Make sure to put together a ‘Go Kit,’ register for emergency notification systems in your community, and make a plan where your family will go and how you will stay in contact if evacuated.”

It is the homeowner’s responsibility to protect their homes by building defensible space. For more information, contact Office of State Fire Marshal, Office of Emergency Management, Keep Oregon Green and the Oregon Department of Forestry.

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