

Exchange student finds her place in Cottage Grove

By Lucas Davey
For The Sentinel

Stella Sobotková had only been staying in Oregon for four days before she was put on varsity for Cottage Grove High School's cross-country team. Sobotková is a foreign exchange student from the city of Beroun in Czech Republic currently attending her junior year at Cottage Grove High School through a foreign exchange program until the end of this school year in June 2018.

The 16-year-old Czech exchange student has been adjusting to life here adeptly. This is partly because the weather and landscape in Oregon is quite similar to that of Czech Republic, especially with our incoming winter storm. But not everything is such a small change from there to here. Aside from missing her family and friends, of course, she most feels the absence of being able to think while walking instead of driving a car from place-to-place.

Sobotková said she feels very lucky to be staying with such a compatible host family. Sobotková is currently living with fellow high school student Savannah Davis and her parents where the work schedules and pescatarian diet are almost identical to that

of her home in Czech Republic.

Ever since she came here, Sobotková has been regularly attending high school sporting events trying to support her new community and soak in the American culture. She is especially excited to experience the holidays that are specific to the United States (or at least the ones they don't celebrate back home) like Halloween and Thanksgiving.

The students at Cottage Grove High School have seemingly taken quite well to Sobotková and she has been making new friends since before school started, thanks to her participating in cross-country. "If you are really shy it's hard for you to be an exchange student because you're afraid to talk in a different language," Sobotková said. "It's a big deal, you know, because I know I make mistakes. I know I sometimes say something that's like total nonsense... and if you're afraid then it's getting harder and harder."

Sobotková has been enjoying the differences in the schoolwork format at the high school as well as the extracurricular activities. In American public schools students are able to choose which classes they want or which classes they think will benefit them. But in Czech Republic each person does not

get to choose their own class schedule, they are put into the same 12 classes as the rest of their classmates for the whole year, although they do not attend every class every day.

Another aspect she feels is more accurate, and comfortable, when grading a student is the American grading style of putting more emphasis on homework and schoolwork and less emphasis on standardized tests. Sobotková says the prominence of this schoolwork/homework grade allows her to focus more on doing the work well since there isn't anyone to stress her out like there is when she is taking tests in class.

She also acknowledges that life is not only about school or a degree or university. It's about the people we meet, the places we go, and the beautiful world around us. She knows that being a foreign exchange student will benefit her in more ways than just academic. "I learn from experiences. I learn from my mistakes. I learn from others," Sobotková said. "Traveling is... a way how to know who you are and who you want to be. It's like how to find yourself." And she will continue to find herself even after she goes home this upcoming summer.

Kennedy gears up for basketball

By Zach Silva
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Like everything at Al Kennedy High School, sports are a little bit different.

This is because at Kennedy, the alternative high school in Cottage Grove, no sports are directly offered through the school. While students can, with the permission of the OSAA and the principals at both Kennedy and Cottage Grove High School, participate in athletics at CGHS, Al Kennedy, the namesake of the school, wanted more opportunities for students and has brought basketball to the school.

"The goal is to see what happens," said the 76-year old Kennedy. Now retired for nearly 20 years, Kennedy, who taught for 45 years and coached basketball for 51 years, is looking to have a recreational team at the high school.

"This is our second workout and we got two kids. Maybe we get three, four, five maybe get a little game going here once a week and find some tournaments to play in and some camps to go to," said Kennedy. "But we're not looking to be a part of an [OSAA] league of any kind because we don't fit any leagues. But we might play Kidsports in the spring, YMCA in the fall. Stuff like that." On Wednesdays after school, Kennedy goes to the gym, rolls out the balls and is ready to help students in any way that he can. Whether teaching proper shooting technique or instructing drills, he is there not only for the love of the game but because he believes in the importance of athletics.

"Oh my goodness, it's more important than academics. Because kids learn to pursue a quest first in athletics and then it can transfer to other things. But I can sell them on a quest here in the gym and I can transfer it to academics," said Kennedy. "The second reason is these kids when they step across the line they risk failure in public. All leaders have to have the courage to risk failure in public."

While there are only two students participating so far, with more mentioning that they are interested, the ones who are there are excited for whatever this team can become.

"I just love basketball. Ever since I first even recognized the sport I immediately fell in love with it," said Andrew Kofoid, a student at Kennedy who came out to the open gym. "I was so happy just having Al to come."

Kennedy sits in a chair and watches Kofoid shoot free throws and instructs him to make six before he misses four. He misses his target and begins running sprints in the half of the gym that is not being used for office space.

"He punishes himself," notes Kennedy. "I don't make him do that."

Kofoid starts shooting again and the cycle continues.

Working on layups down low is Ron Colbert, who decided to play after Kofoid suggested it. Never having played basketball on a formal team, Colbert is excited and nervous about the possibilities of being on a team.

"I'm kind of wanting us to be a team and I can be a bench warmer for the team because I'm not good and would only bring the team down," said Colbert.

A Dia de Muertos tradition

Halloween costumes may go away right after October 31, but the celebration of the macabre and spirits do not get buried so quickly. El Día de los Muertos (The Day of the Dead) is celebrated in central and southern Mexico during the early days of November. The day coincides with the Catholic All Soul's Day and All Saint's Day and incorporates many different traditions.

One of the more recognizable traditions is the creation of "calaveritas de azúcar," or "sugar skulls." These are decorative or edible skulls made from either clay or sugar, which are used in celebrations. The origin of these molded skulls can be traced back to the Spanish conquest of Mexico. Although the dead were already honored in Mexico, the Spanish brought their own customs, including molded decorations. Because sugar was readily accessible in Mexico and quite affordable, using it to make molds was a natural

choice.

Sugar skulls are placed on an "ofrenda," or "decorated altar," that features candles, buckets of flowers, feathers, fruits, and much more. The name of someone who has passed away and is to be honored is written across the forehead of the sugar skull. Adherents of this tradition believe that the gates of heaven are opened at midnight on October 31 and the spirits of deceased children can reunite and celebrate with their families for 24 hours. On November 2, adult spirits join the festivities.

In many indigenous or rural areas, the Day of the Dead can be quite expensive, with many families spending several month's income to honor dead relatives. After food and gifts are shared, the celebration is taken to the cemetery, where tombs are cleaned and loved ones are remembered and spoken of. Music and games also may ensue.

The size and colors of sugar skulls vary. Small skulls represent those who passed at a young age, while larger ones are for adults. Sugar skulls are vibrantly colored to reflect life, which the Day of the Dead celebrates. Skulls may have glitter and be decorated with hats and bows.

Some sugar skulls are made entirely of edible ingredients, and very few are solely used as decoration rather than something to eat.



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Students of the Month

LONDON SCHOOL



ELIJAH SMITH

London School would like to nominate Elijah Smith for the October Student of The Month. Elijah is a 4th grader in Mr. Alkire's 4th/5th Grade Class. He is a student who is always on task, very respectful, and is a courteous class member. I also appreciate his willingness to try new things. Elijah is a good friend to everyone in our class. He uses his time wisely and has excellent stamina when it comes to completing his classwork. Way to go Elijah!

DORENA ELEMENTARY



ELSA CAMERON

Elsa is a leader in the preschool classroom. She shows up to school every day with a positive attitude, ready to learn. She is friendly and kind to all, and eager to learn as much as she can at school!

HARRISON ELEMENTARY



CASEDEE TOUGH

Casedee Tough is one awesome student! She comes to school everyday with a positive attitude and is ready to learn. She leads by example. Her teachers can always count on her to be safe, respectful, and responsible. Casedee demonstrates her committed to learning by actively listening, embracing challenges, putting forth her best effort, and critically thinking about content. Casedee exhibits grit and perseverance in many situations, making her one tough cookie.

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LINCOLN MIDDLE SCHOOL



TRISTAN BENTLEY

Tristan Bentley is Lincoln Middle School's October Student of the Month. Tristan earns excellent grades due to his hard work and diligence. Tristan is also a kind and helpful young man who is always willing to help others with their work. In addition, Tristan is well rounded and enjoys many things outside school including athletics. He is such a great role model to other students!

ELKTON HIGH SCHOOL



JAYCE CLEVINGER

Jayce is a freshmen at Elkton High School. He is a very good student that works hard and is responsible for his commitments. He is a leader in his class and also on the football team. He is extremely kind, courteous and respectful to staff and students. He is cheerful, optimistic and a great student!

KENNEDY ALT. HIGH SCHOOL



KALIE HEISER-BOOTH

Kalie is committed to getting her GED. She advocates for herself and is a positive leader in class.

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