

## Kennedy *Continued from C1*

Kennedy joined their ranks after Al Kennedy saw his former students playing a knife game outside a class they were supposed to be in. The kids had been part of the Cottage Grove High School's forestry program, led by Kennedy, before it was cut from the curriculum. "...All of the redneck kids in Cottage Grove took forestry," Kennedy, a teacher of 45 years, said. "So, I had the badass boys and then they canceled forestry and I watched my badass boys go into traditional programs and stink them up and disrupt them because they were confrontational and ornery," he said.

Kennedy approached the administration. He was given a classroom and all of the "bad" kids.

Since then, Kennedy has seen the program grow from a classroom of students, to being recognized as a school and to now having their own campus. "I drove the model-T and they are in a Cadillac," he says of the transformation.

"In alternative school the rule is: you pursue your passion and I'll turn it into math, science and social studies... Like a kid comes up and says, I'm into tattooing. I said, that's great. I want a report on the history of tattooing next week," he said. "At a traditional school it is more like being in the marching band and you've got to stay in step and play your instrument at the same time. And alternative school it's not like being in a band, it's like taking private music lessons," he said.

While ideologies and teaching methods between Kennedy and the traditional Cottage Grove High School are easily compared, the significance of statistics on student performance is more difficult to pin down.

Kennedy's four-year graduation rate for the 2015-2016 school year was 16.67 percent. Cottage Grove High School's was 93.62 percent—the second highest in the state.

"When I look at these statistics, I compare them to other alternative high schools," said South Lane Superintendent Krista Parent. "We're having kids finish. Many of them dropped out and we got them back by offering Kennedy. If it had not been for Kennedy, they would have been high school drop outs with an eighth or ninth grade education," she said.

Parent also noted the nature of Kennedy, stating that students often arrive there with large educational gaps. The school's five-year graduation rate for the same time period in 2015-2016 was 26.87 percent; more than a 10 percent jump.

"When you look at the Cottage Grove High School graduation rate for the last three years, it's been in the top three in the state. But, if not for Kennedy, those kids would have dropped out and counted as drop outs for Cottage Grove High School's drop-out rate," Parent said. The 2015-2016 drop-out rate for Cottage Grove High School is less than one percent. Kennedy's was 19.8 percent.

Ketcher acknowledges that the goal is to send kids to college, but that may not be feasible for every Kennedy student.

They face poverty (X percent of the students attending Kennedy are considered homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act), teen pregnancy, unstable home lives and learning disabilities but Kennedy has become more than a statistic. The reasons students find themselves there are varied and weighted by each individual student's passions, progress and personal struggles.

One of them

And there is no teacher or administrator more familiar with what the students are going through than Ketcher.

One of four kids, Ketcher grew up on a farm in Minnesota with a family that did not have money and did not put an emphasis on education. Her mom dropped out of school the first week of freshman year in high school and her dad in the first week of his sophomore year of high school.

And so, when Ketcher walked into kindergarten on the first day she did not know any of the letters in the alphabet. She didn't begin reading until she was in the third grade.

"I was in Special Ed not because I had a learning disability but because I was a product of poverty," she said.

But in fifth grade when a teacher spent extra time working with her, her outlook changed.

"I had a teacher that stayed after school with me every day and read with me and cheered me up. And when I would cry she would be like, 'I'm not going to take that, you're going to wipe those tears away and we're going to read this book and we're going to do it right now,'" she said.

It was then that Ketcher decided she was going to be a teacher.

With her family living paycheck to paycheck, Ketcher earned straight A's in high school, was on the cheer team, worked 30 hours a week and was excited and ready to go to college.

"My mom thought that going to college was the dumbest thing I could ever do. She thought, why would you pay money to go to school. I would have paid money to get out of school," she said.

Ketcher got her degree at Arizona State and on graduation day, was offered a teaching job.

Of her 23 cousins, she is the only one to go to college but then, and now, Ketcher believes in the power of education. She believes that it offers students a way forward and that it can provide a path to success. And it is why she chose Kennedy.

"This is what took me out of the loop of poverty and so I hope that kids will grasp onto that," said Ketcher.

"These kids are me."

# SUPPORTING NEWSPAPERS IN EDUCATION

Thank you to the following supporters:

Ruth Ackley  
Irene Bauder  
Angie Borigo  
James and Carol Brownson  
Cindy Conrad  
Russell and Lee Cooper  
Robert and Mary Carrier  
Bob and Janette Dill  
Long Family  
Jeffrey & Karen Freeman  
Kathryn Flynn  
Jean Furguson  
Mary Gabrielle, MD  
James & Barbara Grant  
John and Donna Mansfield  
Lonny Perini  
Ron Pupke  
Elaine Roberts  
Emily Settlemyer  
Donna Shepherd  
Robert Swaringin  
Jan Thompson  
Randy Turpin  
Carol Volesky

## Students of the Month

### LONDON SCHOOL



JOSEPHINE ECKSTINE

We would like to nominate KG student Josephine Eckstine for Student of The Month. Josephine is in Mrs. Christianson's KG/1st classroom. Josephine notices when others need a friend and likes to help her classmates. Josie takes time to make sure others feel included and needed. She has a great attitude and works extremely hard at everything she does. Josephine is conscientious and polite. She is on task, diligent and thoughtful. Josie always has a smile on her face and comes in each day excited and ready to learn.

### DORENA ELEMENTARY



ADAM WILMARTH

Adam has proven to be a leader in showing responsibility among his peers. He is often encouraging others to try their best and stay focused in a kind, calm manner. He comes to school with a positive attitude and displays respect for his peers, his school, and his teachers. This year, he has gained a new confidence in reading and enjoys learning and practicing his new skills.

### HARRISON ELEMENTARY



GRIFFEY DIMOCK

Griffey is an exceptional student. He works diligently in his academics. He reads fluently, writes skillfully, and especially enjoys and does well in mathematics. Besides being a strong student, Griffey is a terrific person. He is kind and considerate of the feelings of others. He treats adults and peers with respect, and he consistently models what it is to be a Harrison Bobcat. I am delighted to name Griffey as this month's Student of the Month, and believe that he truly deserves this special recognition.



**MID-LANE**  
4237 W. 5th Ave • Eugene  
541-345-7570 TRUCK & EQUIPMENT REPAIR

**STARFIRE**  
2795 MOSBY CREEK RD, COTTAGE GROVE  
(541) 942-0168  
WWW.STARFIRELUMBER.COM

**JACK SPRATS**  
510 E MAIN ST, COTTAGE GROVE  
(541) 942-8408  
WWW.JACKSPRATSBRATS.COM

### LINCOLN MIDDLE SCHOOL



SHAE VALLEY

Shae Valley is Lincoln Middle School's Student of the Month! Shae's qualities are too numerous to count! It would take a lifetime to describe how kind, compassionate, helpful, funny, intelligent, reliable, and gritty she is. Shae is a hard worker but is always willing to stop what she is doing and assist at any time. She is also very polite - wearing a smile on her face at almost all times. We appreciate her gentle nature, positive attitude, and self-motivation! Shae is a truly wonderful human being. !

### ELKTON HIGH SCHOOL



BAILEY CARTER

Bailey is a responsible and conscientious student. She is currently our Student Body Treasurer. She is bright, intelligent and an honor roll student. She is a very kind and friendly student that gets along great with all students and staff. She is a great student!




**Brad's Chevy**  
COTTAGE GROVE CHEVROLET, INC.  
2775 Row River Rd • 541-942-4415  
bradschevy.com

**Cottage Grove Sentinel**  
116 N. 6th St. • 541-942-3325  
www.cgscntinel.com