

Lights for the bike path



PHOTO BY CAITLYN MAY/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

Mayor Jeff Gowing cuts a ceremonial ribbon signalling the introduction of lights to the bike path in Cottage Grove. Gowing said the lights would provide an added sense of safety on the trail at night and hoped it meant an increase in use. The 12 lights are part of the initial phase which will eventually see the totality of the path lit.

Zombie Continued from A1

the city is considering boarding the house up with the possessions inside and securing the property rather than purchase additional storage that complies with state mandates.

Abatement is expected to begin this week.

The lease was described as a "last-option" for houses around the city whose owners have stopped paying the mortgage

and may have left the area.

Meyers says he hopes to bill the bank responsible for the homes to spur movement in the foreclosure process.

Kennedy Continued from A1

ferret out key terms, they can do so while listening to rock music from Henson's computer or their own through borrowed headphones.

"I have one student who says, 'I can't do it. I can't do it.' Every time." Henson said of one of his combination kids. "They do it and say, 'I did it' and I tell them, 'Yes, you did it, just like last time. I always look at it as a choice. At Kennedy, it's this microcosm of choices,'" he said.

Another choice

Odysseyware is a computer-based program taught by one teacher who reviews student work and holds a weekly check-in. It requires 15 hours a week broken into three hours a day, Monday through Friday. It affords students up to six credits a term, two less than the cohort model.

"It's for kiddos who are behind, to get them up to speed," Ketcher said. "Ideally, we want to cycle them out of Odysseyware and into the cohorts."

It's an ideal program for students who don't quite fit into the cohort model due to a variety of circumstances that range from having anxiety to simply being behind in their schooling. They can catch-up and acclimate to school again while earning credits that will add up to the golden number for a diploma: 75.

A spark

A key in the mission of Kennedy is to get students to be at school. It often feels getting attendance up is not just half the battle, but is the entirety of the war. So after former principal Mike Ingman and Ketcher attended a conference about students pursuing what ignites them – their spark – the school took the idea and ran with it.

To get students excited about what they are learning, it starts with the teachers. They focus on what kids are passionate about and, with input from the students, create a class that meets twice a week based around a topic. The teacher, in the role of a facilitator, guides the conversation and lessons to where the students are interested in going.

The sparks filled a gap for students who had bemoaned the fact that Kennedy offered no elective courses. In an effort to break up the steady rhythm of the school day these classes let students dive into something they are interested in. This year, those interests include a green team, crafts, music, basketball and storytelling.

"The whole idea is it was kind of part of our thing to increase student attendance. If you are doing something that kind of interests you, you're more likely going to come to school," said Jessica Martinez, the GED instructor at Kennedy and also the leader of the green team spark.

"If you're doing something you like, you're more likely to like push through those things like challenges and not be like, 'Ugh, I give up. It sucks.' And so you know, it has a lot of really good things because one it's fun, two it helps you kind of develop those skills and gives you a reason to want to be here."

"At the first meeting I cried"

With the spirit of reducing, reusing and recycling guiding their way, the green team at Kennedy gets to work. This group is part-custodian, part-researcher and part-teacher all in the pursuit of sustainability. During this spark period, the students are busy. They collect the recycling and compost from around the school but are also have a whiteboard dedicated to building their new composting bins. But whatever the work is, it's trying to accomplish something.

"I knew I was excited about it and that our kids really like to do hands-on projects," said Martinez. "They point the ship and I'm like, okay, let's go. Okay, let's do it."

Last year the ship was steered towards getting the school into a composting program that has only grown since arriving at the new Kennedy.

"I knew going into green team we were going to be starting a compost program but you phrase it and frame it in a way that's their idea. Kind of," said Martinez.

After completing a trash audit that had students collect all the garbage from one school day and weigh it ("It's really gross and horrible," added Martinez) the findings were that there was a large amount of food waste that could be composted.

"That was the big need. I knew that was the big need, but they said, 'Hey! That's the biggest need.' Yeah what can we do? 'We can compost.' Alright, how are we going to do it?"

This year the school has two compost bins but the green team is in the process of designing a compost system that will feature worms to help break down the waste. But with the addition of worms, the students of Kennedy are thinking much bigger about what animals that they want on school property.

"We want to get chickens again here.' And then they're like pigs, goats. Because we have a lot of space but I'm like whoa, back it up, we're going to get worms – we're going to do the worm thing first because that's our priority," said Martinez.

And before these additional animals, the next step will be bees that will be coming to the school as soon as this winter. Kennedy used to house bees and they are returning to their old ways this year. A local beekeeper from Urban Honey will be bringing beehives to the school that the students will get a chance to work on and learn from.

Students with the green team have also been involved with Our Future Oregon. The Our Future project is run by the Eugene non-profit Partners for Sustainable Schools (PSS) and works to get students around Lane County to focused on sustainability. Each month a few students head to Eugene where they meet with students from other schools and discuss how they can continue to grow.

"At the first meeting I cried," said a proud Martinez. "It's really neat to have the kids go to those meetings, learn stuff from other schools and teach other schools what we're doing and have them be impressed."

Learning on the court

From learning about martial arts to planning a fishing trip to shooting half-court shots: this is life in David Heritage's spark.

"For about six weeks the kids stayed interested in martial arts. At that point the general consensus was to play basketball most of the time," said Heritage, a math and science teacher talking about his ever-evolving spark. "And therefore, because they had the same goals as far as getting the kids out and

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