

SV Athletics needs help after theft



PHOTO COURTESY SOUTH VALLEY ALTHETICS

South Valley Athletics is asking the community to help raise funds for its stolen soccer equipment.

By Caitlyn May
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Residents can donate to the gofundmepage or become sponsors for teams--which includes your name on a team shirt--by contacting South Valley Athletics.

In 2016, voters approved a \$35 million bond. It meant the construction of a new school, improvements to the community pool and an update for security and technology around South Lane School District. It also meant South Valley Athletics was out of storage space.

"We lost access to the old high school building back when the bond measure passed and so we bought a big cargo trailer," said coach Dustin Bengston. That trailer housed the organizations balls, goals and striping machine—everything nearly 200 kids need to play soccer.

Sometime just before or after Christmas Day, it was stolen.

"My guess is the equipment was probably was dumped somewhere," Bengston said. "They wanted the trailer and we filed police reports but we don't think we'll have the equipment returned."

That's a problem because the end of January means soccer registration.

South Valley Athletics was already behind the ball in gearing up for the soccer season. Prior to the theft, the

organization was fundraising to repair the fields full of divots, making for an uneven pitch.

"Now, that takes a backseat to the basics," Bengston said.

The organization is asking the community to pitch in and help raise money for new soccer equipment. According to Bengston, \$7,000 would buy back what was stolen.

Currently, a gofundme page has raised just over \$1,500.

Whether or not the group reaches its \$7,000 goal, Bengston said soccer season will go on but not without some cutbacks.

"We do about \$10,000 a year in deferred fees and scholarships so that's a big chunk of money so that has the potential to be affected," he said.

South Valley athletics serves approximately 800 children through the year and Bengston expects an average of 200 to participate in soccer.

"We will find a way," he said. "We have found a way for 47 years, we will find a way for the kids to play soccer."

To donate, visit gofundme.com/soccerequipmentrecovery or contact South Valley Athletics at (541) 942-3079.

CGHS has top grad rate in Lane

State average still needs work



By Caitlyn May
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The Oregon Department of Education announced that the state—which has routinely fallen to the bottom of the list regarding graduation—has made the single largest improvement in graduation rates in eight years with an overall average of just under 77 percent; up from 75 percent last year.

Cottage Grove High School padded the average, reporting 95.98 percent of its seniors as on-time graduates.

"All our staff in South Lane is working hard to ensure our kids succeed," said South Lane School Board Chair Alan Baas of the report. "From our elementary schools, to our middle school and at the high school level, it is clear that our priority is ensuring all our kids are succeeding and getting the support they need."

District-wide, South Lane's average hovered around 76 percent, on track with the state average. No other school in the district, other than Academy Charter (which reported three seniors) met a 50 percent on-time graduation rate. Child's Way came in at 36 percent and Kennedy High School scored 20 percent. Academy Charter reported 100 percent.

"For the third time in four years Cottage Grove High School has the highest four-year graduation rate of any comprehensive high school in Lane County," a press release issued by South Lane Communications Coordinator Garrett Bridgens read.

State officials attribute part of the overall percentage jump in graduation rates to the improvement in the number of Latino graduation rates around the state. Students who identify as Latino, approximately 20 percent state-wide, saw an increase of just over seven percentage points over the course of the last three years.

However, the increase in Oregon's rate still falls short of the national average. The state's graduation rate has been ranked as the third worst for the last two years, falling short of the top three spots which all earned between 88 and 90 percent graduation rates.

Statistically, schools around South Lane, such as Kennedy High School, see improvement in the five-year graduation rate that is not included in the state's on-time graduation rate. Because the state of Oregon is mandated to provide public education to students until the age of 21, students who drop-out of traditional high schools often find their way to schools such as Kennedy to complete their education after being enrolled in a South Lane high school for more than four years.

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