

EARLY DEADLINE

Due to the upcoming Memorial Day holiday, the Cottage Grove Sentinel will be closed May 28. Deadline for the May 30 edition will be May 24 at noon for all editorial submissions and advertising.

# Cottage Grove Sentinel

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SPORTS

Cottage Grove softball wins at home in a stunner. B1

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 9, 2018

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They know what you call them...

## "Bad Kids"

But they're taking back the title because this is their school. And their story.



On an early September morning, the staff of Al Kennedy High School gathered in a room at the South Lane School District offices. The Sentinel had approached the district in the prior weeks about chronicling the teachers and students at Kennedy to tell the story of alternative education through the lens of those on the ground. District administrators thought it was a great idea. Kennedy staff had questions. Eight educators sat in a room with a newspaper editor and had a conversation. At the end, they'd come to an understanding: The truth is the truth and the kids come first. Over the course of the 2017-2018 school year, The Sentinel will tell the story of these educators and their students as they navigate a location change, funding gaps and the unfortunately true narrative that sometimes working hard isn't enough and an education doesn't fix everything. We'll tell stories of triumph, tragedy and truth as the tribe at Kennedy makes the most with what it has in its continued effort to slingshot students up and over the barriers to progress through understanding, commitment and engagement while acknowledging the reality that some kids won't make it.

### PROM

By Caitlyn May  
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The building located at 700 E Gibbs Ave. isn't very big — just one story that fits neatly between two blocks — but it holds a lot. The library calls 700 E. Gibbs home, as does the senior center, which is equipped with an exercise pool for older residents to work out sore muscles and follow doctors' orders. To the right of the chamber of commerce and left of the genealogical society, double doors mark the entrance to the community center where candidates give stump speeches, nonprofits feed the homeless and, sometimes, young residents ring in 'Sweet 16.' But for all of its responsibility to a city of 10,000, the lights go out at 700 E. Gibbs not long after the sun sets and the busy building falls quiet.

On Friday, Katy Perry broke the silence. So did Bruno Mars. And Maroon 5. And Sir Mix-a-Lot. Song and dance floated out through the double doors and down the hall to the genealogy center. And chamber of commerce. And senior center. And the library. The Kennedy kids were throwing a party. Prom. "The kids made all the decorations," it's Halie

Ketcher's first prom as Kennedy principal. She was promoted to the position after Cottage Grove High School principal Iton Udosenata announced he would be moving to North Eugene; former Kennedy principal Mike Ingman stepped into the position, placing Ketcher in Ingman's chair. At the March school board meeting, the South Lane School Board voted to strip 'interim' from her title and give her the gig on a more permanent basis.

The decision provides a bit more stability at Kennedy, which undertook a move to Delight Valley this year, but didn't seem to empower Ketcher to make a crucial decision: Vetoing any other proposed prom theme than "Star Wars" for the school's May 4 shindig.

"May the fourth be with you, I know," said Kennedy math teacher David Heritage. Supposedly, the staff lobbied hard for Yoda and crew but the students tossed away the golden opportunity and, instead, landed on camping.

Campfires made from tissue paper and ingenuity bookended the DJ booth while cardboard birds hung from the ceiling. At the center, a tree made from streamers blew in the wind of wild dancing and teenage spirit.

"They made the gifts too," Ketcher said, pointing out the neatly packaged, deconstructed smores that served as favors before taking off for the dance floor again.

It was a popular spot to be.

Approximately 30 of the 78 students enrolled at Kennedy attended prom this year, an event that according to Kennedy staff isn't open just to seniors.

"That's the thing about Kennedy, we don't differentiate that way between classes," Heritage said. While prom is open to everyone, Kennedy serves mostly juniors and seniors.

Inside, strobe lights fell over the usual prom activities. Girls perched on boyfriends' knees; group bathroom breaks; couples finding quiet corners; awkward hands hooked at waists and draped over shoulders; and teenagers rushing in, arms raised to make it to the dance floor after hearing the first bar of their favorite song.

Outside, teachers kept count of students arriving and talk about the songs and bands that were popular when they went to prom ("Drops of Jupiter" and No Doubt). Just inside the fenced courtyard, students hold klatches in ball gowns and top hats, a hard-driving effort to get an unlikely pair to dance well underway.

The scene closes the inches of difference between the kids at Kennedy and their peers at Cottage Grove High School, reaffirming that the only thing that separates them is opportunity and circumstance. It makes one shutter to raise a camera and somehow diminish the ecstasy of being 18 and dancing in the dark with your friends on the edge of what's to come.

## School board names interim super

By Caitlyn May  
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"I haven't seen Kyle (Tucker) smile that big in awhile," South Lane School Board Vice Chair Sherri Duerst-Higgins said moments after the board voted unanimously to approve Larry Sullivan as the interim superintendent for the 2018-2019 school year.

Tucker, who has been the acting superintendent since March of this year, declined the opportunity to apply for the position.

"I worked with Larry at ESD and he'll do a great job," Duerst-Higgins continued.

Sullivan addressed the meeting briefly saying, "I'm excited to be here. So much so, I came out of retirement."

The position, posted by Oregon School Board Association's Steve Kelley, emphasized the 'interim' nature of the job with Kelley gearing up to advertise

See Interim A6

## State clears Parent of misconduct

By Caitlyn May  
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South Lane Superintendent Krista Parent has been cleared by the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission after allegations of misconduct surfaced in 2017.

"On April 6, 2018, the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission reviewed a preliminary investigation report regarding the allegations and is dismissing the complaint filed against you based upon insufficient cause to charge you with misconduct," a letter from the organization read.

TSPC is the state licensing agency for educators and is tasked with establishing, upholding and enforcing professional standards. Under Oregon law, TSPC is required to investigate all complaints concerning possible professional misconduct on the part of a licensed teacher or administrator in the state of Oregon.

"Although I felt confident that

See Parent A10

COMMUNITY

### Remembering Nancy

Backstage Bakery remembers its founder. PAGE A5



SPORTS

### Field dedication

Yoncalla remembers a star player. PAGE B1

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## COFFEE WITH THE EDITOR

Have a news tip? Want to talk about community events? Have a question? Stop by Backstage Bakery.

The LAST THURSDAY of every month from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.

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