

CGHS from B1

a whole has transcended the typical dedication and passion often seen in more mainstream sports.

“It’s fun, it’s what I’m supposed to be doing,” said the junior Latham. “When you’re on the horse everything else goes away and this is what I’m supposed to be doing. Nothing really else matters.”

This sentiment from Latham was not entirely unique to this group but par for the course.

“When I started riding horses I knew it was forever. I knew I would always want to keep doing it,” said Ladd.

“It’s pretty much my life, honestly,” said Wood. “This horse pretty much got me through everything. I used to be very closed off and depressed and she just opened me up.”

What this passion has turned into is hours upon hours of practice. The equestrian season kicks off in November and stretches all the way into mid-June. In that stretch of time the fall sports season at CGHS has concluded in addition to the winter and spring sports seasons both starting and finishing. But what stands out is not just the long-term commitment of any one given season but what a typical day of practice entails.

“They bust their butt. This is like no other sport,” said co-advisor Sias. “Mom and dad can’t drop you off at a gymnasium and drive away and come back in three hours. They are hauling horses.”

The school day ends at 3:10 p.m. at CGHS (and 2:07 p.m. on Wednesdays) at which point the scramble begins to get things ready for practice.

The team practices four days a week – a fact that was alarming to other teams in the league that practice once a week – at 5:30 p.m. To be ready to start on time, the athletes arrive at practice at about 4:45 p.m. The process of getting trailers hooked up and horses loaded generally begins for each girl at around 4:00 p.m. Sias

noted that the general team policy is that you have to have your own horse and own transportation.

This gives the student-athletes about 50 minutes from the time the final bell rings at school to when they need to be at their house getting everything ready for practice.

“On practice days I speed home the best I can, like, aim for 3:30, 3:40. I get home, I get dressed – because I have to wear my boots and all that – I go straight to the barn so I can clean their stalls if I can before practice if I have time. If not then I saddle them up and head off to practice,” said Ladd.

The Lions rotate where they practice but, for the most part, stay relatively local. Two nights a week they are at a private arena off Mosby Creek and on Fridays they are at an arena down Lynx Hollow where they get to practice with cows. The team has also bounced around from the Oregon Horse Center in Eugene, an arena in Creswell to, in years past, having to trek to Albany and Salem for practice.

With two co-advisors, five coaches, an unattached volunteer and a dedicated team mom, the team is well taken care of and, at practice, there is no shortage of expert opinions in each discipline. Coaches focused on performance, gaming, drills, cows and other specialties to make sure the team is prepared. After going through the focus of the day may be, practice usually wraps up around 8:00 p.m.

“It doesn’t end there because once they’ve practiced for two or three hours the horse is hot and sweaty,” said self-described team mom Kelli Latham. “You can’t put a blanket on them, now you have to cool them down. Sometimes we’re outside so we can blanket them and put them back in the pasture at 9:00 at night.”

By the time horses are loaded back up into trailers, taken to their respective homes and put away for the night, it is even later.

“Sometimes I’m cleaning stalls and feeding them and watering them until like 10:30 p.m.,” said Ladd.

Four days a week stretching from November to June, the members of the equestrian team are spending a minimum of five hours of their evenings centered around practice. And through it all – snow, flooding, near triple-digit heat last week – the team continues to practice.

“When people are worried about weather during the ‘Snow-pocalypse,’” said Sias with some sarcasm and an eye-roll at the term, “you have kids out in 30 degrees, two feet of snow, breaking snow so their horses are watered and fed. They don’t get to sit inside. They work their butt off”

When the team isn’t practicing or at school, they are often out fundraising to ensure that they can continue to compete. This is a year-round commitment of selling cinnamon rolls or candy bars; parking cars at the Eugene Pro Rodeo and other events; and returning bottles. And somewhere in this endless cycle, they find a way to get their homework done.

“We have the exact same rules as every other sport. Grades, attendance, school comes first. The really cool thing, I have the best kids,” said Sias. “I don’t ever have to worry about a kid ever not being eligible. Every week when the school sends out reports, I never get a kid that I ever have to worry about. They are amazing.”

While Sias is proud of her athletes for what they do in the classroom, she has also watched the team thrive since she helped take over the program eight years ago. After her son’s freshman year she stepped into the main role of advisor and had no plans of coaching after he graduated and yet she keeps going.

“The problem is, you have (athletes) and you get to know them. So I have freshmen this year that I’ve got to know this season and I say, ‘This is going to be my last



Top: The entire CGHS equestrian team earlier this season. Below: The district-winning team penning group.

year.’ And they’re like, ‘But, can’t you just wait until I’m a senior? It’s only two more years.’ And then you feel so bad because you have this connection to these kids and so you stay. And then the next year there are more kids that you make a connection with and here you are eight years later with no children at home and you’re still here,” said Sias.

“Because you just enjoy watching them and you’ve made relationships. And yeah, you want to see them achieve all their goals. And it’s hard. It’s kind of like my baby and I’m scared to hand it to somebody else.”

In her time as coach the expectation for each athlete has been state, a goal that has been

CGHS *see conclusion on B4*




FIREMED

JOIN TODAY

942-4493

WATER SAFETY TIPS

Whether it’s a trip to the beach or a dip in the community or backyard pool, you can ensure that swimming is as safe as it is fun by following a few basic safety tips.

THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR ACTIVE SUPERVISION

Actively supervise children in and around open bodies of water, giving them your undivided attention.

Whenever infants or toddlers are in or around water, an adult should be within arm’s reach to provide active supervision. We know it’s hard to get everything done without a little multitasking, but this is the time to avoid distractions of any kind. If children are near water, then they should be the only thing on your mind. Small children can drown in as little as one inch of water.

EDUCATE YOUR KIDS ABOUT SWIMMING SAFELY

Every child is different, so enroll children in swimming lessons when you feel they are ready. Teach children how to tread water, float and stay by the shore.

Make sure kids swim only in areas designated for swimming. Teach children that swimming in open water is not the same as swimming in a pool.

They need to be aware of uneven surfaces, river currents, ocean undertow and changing weather.

Whether you’re swimming in a backyard pool or in a lake, teach children to swim with a partner, every time. From the start, teach children to never go near or in water without an adult present.

You can start introducing your babies to water when they are about 6 months old. Remember to always use waterproof diapers and change them frequently.

DON’T RELY ON SWIMMING AIDS

- Remember that swimming aids such as water wings or noodles are fun toys for kids, but they should never be used in place of a U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD).

TAKE THE TIME TO LEARN CPR

We know you have a million things to do, but learning CPR should be on the top of the list. It will give you tremendous peace of mind – and the more peace of mind you have as a parent, the better.

Local hospitals, fire departments and recreation departments offer CPR training.

Have your children learn CPR. It’s a skill that will serve them for a lifetime.

SUMMER BOATING TIPS:

Alcohol and boating don’t mix. Studies have shown that even a small amount of alcohol, when combined with the marine environment, can seriously impair your judgement. Passengers should avoid going “overboard” as well.

When fueling your boat, stop all engines, motors, and other devices that could produce sparks. Always leave with a full tank.

Conduct a safety orientation before leaving the pier. This includes location of life preservers, how to put them on, location of life rafts and location of emergency check-off list.

Be prepared. Talk to experienced service personnel about what kind of parts and tools you should carry on your boat. A first-aid kit and emergency supplies are also a must.

Check the weather before leaving and heed all small craft advisories.

Make a float plan and make sure someone on shore knows your exact route.

JOSEPH OSBORN PLUMBING
1214 E. Madison Ave
541-942-6899
josbornplumbing@gmail.com

FOUNTAIN GUTTERS LLC
Cottage Grove
541-729-9515
fountaingutters.com
fountaingutters@gmail.com

OREGON WATER SERVICES INC
30086 Federal Lane
Eugene
541-342-1718
oregonwaterservices.com

PEACEHEALTH COTTAGE GROVE COMMUNITY MEDICAL CENTER
1515 Village Drive
Cottage Grove, Oregon 97424
541-942-0511
Peacehealth.org/
cottage-grove-medical-center

KIMWOOD MACHINERY INC
77684 Hwy 99
541-942-4401
kimwood.com

PINOCCHIOS PIZZA
Gateway Blvd & Main St.
541-942-5531

MATT BJORNIN, STATE FARM INSURANCE
1481 Gateway Blvd
541-942-2623
Bjornninsurance.com

NORTH DOUGLAS FIRE & EMS
531 S. Cedar
Drain
541-836-2282
ndcfems.us

WHITSELL MANUFACTURING
32910 E. Saginaw Rd
541-726-6637