

Lincoln Middle School Teacher receives award from OSTA

Recently, the Oregon Science Teacher Association announced that Halli Rousell, first year teacher at Lincoln Middle School in Cottage Grove, was awarded the 2019 Outstanding Early Career Classroom Teacher Award for Region 3 at its annual meeting on Oct. 11 and 12 at Lane Community College.



BULLY from C1

Oregon Safe Schools Act of 2009 gave definitions for bullying, and in 2012, the Act was strengthened to include more reporting measures for districts. The OSSCC rated districts for years on their bullying policies, with a “gold star” rating the goal of every district. The ratings, gold, silver and bronze star, measured compliance with state law and whether school policy included specific language for staff training and/or gender identity-based bullying and harassment. Eventually, so many schools came into compliance with the law that the organization no longer felt it necessary to

rate them, according to Joy Wallace, co-chair of the OSSCC board. South Lane School District (SLSD) achieved a “silver star” rating in 2012 and maintained that through 2014, which was the final year districts were graded; NDS was recognized as a “gold star district” beginning in 2013. However, despite the abundance of gold star districts, bullying rates have stayed almost constant. But what exactly is bullying? ORS 339.351 defines bullying and harassment as any action that “substantially interferes with a student’s educational benefits, opportunities, or performance”—while taking place in school or at school-sponsored

activities and locations, including bus stops — resulting in physical harm or property damage, instilling fear of that harm or damage, or “creat[es] a hostile educational environment, including interfering with the psychological well-being of a student.” It may or may not be based on protected classes like race and gender. At Bohemia Elementary School, they have a slightly different definition: “We define bullying as something that is targeted harassment over time,” said principal Heather Bridgens. “It can be physical or verbal abuse. It can be intimidating. It doesn’t have to be something that can be seen or heard...It’s something that happens more than one time.

“The key difference [between simply being disrespectful or unkind and bullying] is that it is targeted and happens more than one time.” School districts are required by ORS 339.356 to have a policy on bullying and harassment as well as reporting procedures for students and faculty, but there is no statewide set of procedures or policies enforced among schools. That makes comparative data collection difficult. In fact, Oregon doesn’t collect data on bullying incidents unless it involves removing a student from school, according to Lisa Bateman, a Social Emotional Learning Specialist with the Oregon Department of Education. In addition, changes in staff training and differ-

ent definitions of bullying have made comparing data from year to year murky at best. “When we record behavior as bullying or disrespect, something we recorded as bullying before we might more accurately record as disrespect now,” Bridgens said. It’s not always easy to figure out why kids bully each other, either. “Bullies are individuals. [They] are children that have pasts...They have issues that they have to deal with,” said SLSD interim assistant superintendent Brian McCasline. “That’s one of the more difficult things about this type of behavior, I think. You’re not going to get a straight answer on ‘these are the five reasons why kids bully’ because there’s not just five and it de-

pends on the student.” SLSD is making efforts to track and prevent bullying through a more unified data collection system, a district-wide standardized report, and programs in the schools to stop it before it starts. **(Editor’s Note:** In the Oct. 30 edition of *The Sentinel*, we will provide a comprehensive report on a recent sports-related hazing incident that occurred last month at Cottage Grove High School, as well as Part II of this story exploring how SLSD is addressing the issue of bullying — and how those efforts are part of a long-term goal of creating a foundation of anti-bullying education from an early age.)

Community input sought for allocation of SSA funds

The South Lane School District is taking steps to engage stakeholders in the process of investing funds allocated through Oregon’s Student Success Act (SSA). Passed by the legislature, the SSA provides \$1 Billion per year beyond the regular Early Learning and K-12 State School Fund to support early learning, local school districts and a number of statewide educational initiatives starting in the 2019-20 school year. The additional funding provided by the SSA - Student Investment Account is expected to generate an additional \$2.3 million per year beyond regular state funding for the South Lane School District.

Equity is the driving vision behind this legislation. The primary goal of the SSA is to improve outcomes for historically underserved or underachieving students. The district will be providing input opportunities for all stakeholders through surveys and discussion groups. For any parents, students, school board and community members that want to be more involved, SLSD is soliciting participants on a district-level team that will review data and recommendations and help facilitate stakeholder meetings and surveys. SLSD staff that wish to be more involved will have an opportunity to be on small-

er teams that will identify and analyze critical data, especially disparities in outcomes. To participate on either of these teams team, please contact Jeremy Smith (Jeremy.smith@slane.k12.or.us). The Oregon Department of Education is still working on the exact guidelines for the allocation of these funds and SLSD will be following those as they become known. Our main goal at SLSD is that “Children Come First” and this process provides a genuine opportunity to create a more equitable learning environment for all students.

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‘Voice of Democracy’ essay contest deadline Oct. 31

What makes America Great? If you have an answer to this question then you could earn some money and possibly a \$30,000 scholarship. Voice of Democracy is a local essay contest. Pick up

an application from your Language Arts, Social Studies teacher or in the office. This contest is open to grades 9-12. Deadline is Oct. 31. Two other scholarships that have deadlines soon

are the Local Elks Most Valuable student which is Nov. 5. See Ms. Evans or the Career Website for more information.

Student collecting donations for VFW care packages

A Cottage Grove High School student is collecting donations for the veterans of Foreign Wars VFW here in Cottage Grove. Care packages will be sent overseas to our troops to make their holidays

brighter. There are three ways to donate: donating items from the recommended care package item list that can be found in the main office, sending cards or letters or donating money for

postage, any amount will help. Drop off all donations to the bin located in the main office. Donations can be accepted until Nov. 15.

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