

Athletic participation increases at Talmadge

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

INDEPENDENCE — More students are participating in sports now that athletics are back at Talmadge Middle School.

Athletic Director Dale Cutsforth told the Central School Board at its Monday meeting that 339 youths have participated in sports so far this year, compared to 252 during the 2013-14 season.

"We believe a direct impact to participation is the reduced fee," Cutsforth said. "There's nothing worse than turning a kid away who can't pay the fee."

The fee for participating in middle school sports is \$25 since the district reinstated athletics in the building. Before that, Central Youth

Sports, which kept sports programs going while the district could not afford to do so, had a \$75 participation fee.

Cutsforth said having the athletics program back in the school building has helped students — and staff — in other ways.

"It's easier to track academics of athletes," he said. "Another positive is our coaches are teachers."

Through CYS, coaches were often parents or volunteers outside the school culture. Now, coaches see students in the halls and classrooms daily.



Cutsforth

The return of athletics has also added school spirit and pride for the Talmadge Cougars, Cutsforth said.

"The talk around school is what athletic events happened the day before or the week before," he said.

Talmadge Principal Perry LaBounty said the restoration of athletics has gotten students more active and more successful.

"CYS was a great bridge for us, but it's great for us to be restored," he said.

Board member Jennifer Mason said she was pleased that the efforts at the middle school are growing "whole students."

For a schedule for Talmadge athletics: www.central.k12.or.us, go to "schools" and then "Talmadge Middle School."

Practice assessment tests available

Itemizer-Observer staff report

POLK COUNTY — Students in third through eighth grade, as well as 11th grade, will begin taking the state's new test, Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBAC), for math and language arts later this month.

The new testing format, designed to align with Com-

mon Core Standards, is a departure from the previous Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS). It will require students to type answers, a skill not previously required for the old multiple-choice testing format.

For those who would like a sample of the new test be-

fore students begin taking it later this month, practice tests are available at <http://oaksportal.org/>.

The testing window for the SBAC opens on March 10 statewide and runs through the end of the school year.

For more information on the new test, go to www.smarterbalanced.org.

Contract: No negotiations are currently scheduled until April

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Deters noted concerns about the lengthy delay between sessions.

"We are frustrated by the lack of communication by the board, even though that is one of their board goals," he said.

In the meantime, the association's unfair labor prac-

tices complaint filed with the Oregon Employment Relations Board in December has been set for a hearing in April.

The complaint alleges the district failed to "bargain in good faith" in putting forth changes it would like to make to the contract. The association asserts those changes

were never formally bargained before they came up in mediation.

In response, the district filed a motion to dismiss the complaint, saying that the district provided a copy of all changes in the form of an updated contract in April 2014 and that constituted a formal proposal.

Mr. and Ms. Central Pageant fundraising efforts heat up

By Emily Mentzer
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INDEPENDENCE — Courtney Rhodes lost several fingers and toes during a childhood illness. She uses a wheelchair and struggles to communicate.

The fundraising efforts of 10 Central High seniors as part of the school's annual Mr. and Ms. Central Pageant will provide an iPad and a wheelchair mount for the device, complete with software to help her communicate better, said Jeff Witt, CHS leadership adviser.

Rhodes, a Central student, is just one individual who will benefit from her fellow students' efforts.

"The rest of the money raised is going to Duffels for Dignity," Witt said, noting the program helps provide foster children with something to put their things in

MEET THE CONTESTANTS

Boys: Max Lydum, Riley Olsen, Lucas Castanon, Branson Wallace and Kaj Bansen. **Girls:** Rianne Huffman, Paula Tamayo, Taylor Ashton, Daniella Diaz and Mandi Desmarreau.

WHAT'S NEXT

The next fundraiser will be on March 14 and March 28, a car wash at Les Schwab in Independence. Proceeds from the event will benefit Ms. Central and the Multicultural Leadership Club.

when they are moved around suddenly.

Mr. and Ms. Central is a sort of beauty pageant, Witt said. Five senior males and five females are chosen and voted on by staff and faculty at the beginning of the school year.

"We have to have a good cross section of our school, but have people willing to commit to this because it's a lot of work, time and effort," Whitt said.

This year's fundraising goal is \$15,000. Last year, the pageant raised \$11,000.

"This group of pageant contestants are the most ambitious I've ever had," Witt noted. "We're a third of the way there already."

Kids are judged on performances and how much they've raised, Witt said.

People may support the pageant by donating to contestants or dropping off new or gently used duffel bags at the high school's front desk.

The pageant will take place April 4 at 7 p.m., the first Saturday of that month. Tickets are \$10 each and may be purchased from contestants or from Central High's front desk.

Teacher: Shafer praised for engaging students in history

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Garland submitted a letter of reference in support of his nomination. She described the amount of time and effort Shafer puts into engaging students in history, including showing film clips, finding little-known facts and details about key events, and relating history to current events.

Once a year around Veteran's Day, he wears his Oregon Army National Guard uniform to school and tells his students about his experience as a soldier.

"The students love this interaction with Mr. Shafer and always leave with a deeper appreciation for our military men and women," Garland continued. "Roger

is a patriot, a staunch citizen willing to sacrifice all for his country, and a wonderful educator."

Shafer first enlisted in the National Guard in 1996, and then re-enlisted after 9/11, serving a total of nine years. He was sent to Iraq for one tour in 2003-04.

"I didn't do anything extraordinary, but what my service did, as a history teacher, it gave me a glimpse into what all the veterans before us have sacrificed," Shafer said.

Following his deployment, Shafer went back to school to finish his teaching degree. He knew exactly what he wanted to teach.

"It was kind of a gamble because the more diversi-

fied you are the more marketable you are as a teacher, but I really wanted to teach social studies," Shafer said. "I sort of put all my cards on the table and was lucky enough that there was a job."

He was a student teacher at Dallas High School in 2005-06, and was hired for the 2006-07 school year. Shafer said for some of his students, his class is the first time they learn about the Revolution and Constitution in detail. He takes that responsibility seriously and it shows to his colleagues.

"He puts so much passion and heart into what he is doing," Garland said. "I can't think of a person more deserving (of the award)."



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