



Julie Schneidecker, left, helps junior Kendyl Dobbins Friday at Dallas High School's new Dragon Study Center. JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Kids helping kids

Peers help each other excel at studies

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Imagine this: You're 16 with four younger siblings. Your parents both work swing shifts to support your family, so it's up to you to be home with the younger children after school, feed them dinner, coordinate bath time and put them to bed.

By 10:15 p.m., you have your first moments to do your own homework and you can't concentrate because you are falling asleep. OK, so you will go to bed and get up early to do homework, but you can't completely fall asleep because you are stressed out about what you need to do the next day.

At school, you struggle to stay awake in class — oh and your homework isn't done.

This is not a social, discipline, or academic issue. It's a matter of not having enough time.

"There's no way that this child can do his homework until we get to the root of why he wasn't getting any sleep," said Dallas High School Assistant Principal Darlene Geddes. "I remember being a new mother — and

he's only 16."

Geddes said that's just one of many situations where the reasons behind a student's struggle in class has more to do with what is happening outside school hours than problems with learning.

In an effort to find — and try to solve — those problems, DHS turned its in-school suspension room into the "Dragon Study Center" and is building a peer mentoring program.

Creating the study center — which is open to all students, not just those assigned to go there by teachers for disciplinary or academic reasons — takes away the stigma of being punished and encourages students to seek help on their own.

Behavior specialist Julie Schneidecker works in the room all day, assisting students with assignments and helping them with discipline issues. She said regardless of the reason they are there, students are all treated the same.

"When you are in here, we do work, we print grades," Schneidecker said. "We kind of go through the same routine with everyone."

Like Geddes, Schneidecker has

found, through building relationships with students, that struggles often stem from simple things, like a lack of organizational skills or not knowing when to ask for help. Some don't even know how bad their grades are, thus the focus on looking at progress reports.

"We are finding that we are able to help kids get caught up in classes and kind of problem-solve to see why issues are happening," Schneidecker said.

Geddes, who is new to the school this year, said many of the reasons students were sent to in-school suspension were minor offenses, such as skipping class. Most of the time that behavior can be changed once students open up about why. Geddes suggested switching the focus off punishment to finding ways to help.

"It gives us that opportunity to have those conversations," Geddes said. "It's pretty amazing, especially when you have students ... start developing relationships not only with each other, but with Julie, that they will begin to share little pieces about what is bothering them or what their struggle is."

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Cyclists need to follow road rules

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — Ever wonder who has the right of way at a stop sign, a bicyclist or a vehicle?

It may surprise you to know that bicyclists are under the same laws as cars when it comes to the rules of the road.

"They're not pedestrians once they're on two wheels," said Chris Eggen, general manager of Veal Bikes Plus.

Educating cyclists — or maybe gently reminding them — about that fact is a goal among many in Monmouth, from Mayor John Oberst to Councilman Marshall Guthrie, from the po-



Chris Eggen offers a variety of safety items at his shop. EMILY MENTZER/Itemizer-Observer

lice department to Eggen.

"We'd like to see them stopping at stop signs and riding a little more safely in

town, staying off sidewalks in the downtown area," said Darrell Tallan, Monmouth police chief. "We try and re-

mind people that it's dangerous to be riding on that sidewalk (downtown)."

Another thing police see a lot of is cyclists who don't obey traffic signs, which is unsafe for the rider and others, Tallan noted.

To help get people back on track, Guthrie — who has been called a model cyclist by Tallan — has teamed up with the folks at Veal Bikes Plus and applied for a grant from the Monmouth Parks and Recreation Board.

If approved, the \$500 grant will be used to offer bicycle safety courses for two groups: one for adults and youths 16 and older; another for those 16 and younger.

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IN YOUR TOWN

DALLAS NEWS

Curtis Alexander was the picture of health and energy.

Alexander, 29, a Polk County Jail deputy and reserve patrol deputy in Benton County, worked hard and exercised every day.

"He was perfectly healthy," Curtis' wife, Shauna, said last week. "He was running three miles a day."

Curtis had his future in mind. He wants to become a police officer some day, and his wife was expecting a son, Colton. The Dallas couple got to meet their little guy on Feb. 10. Only six days later, they received devastating news.

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FALLS CITY NEWS

The city of Falls City and Luckiamute Domestic Water Cooperative have approved a contract that will keep water flowing for the co-op.

After more than two years of negotiations, a lawsuit, and an appeal of the decision in that lawsuit, the two sides have found common ground and sealed it with signatures on Friday.

"I'm really happy with the agreement," said Danny Jaffer, LDWC president.

Approved by LDWC on March 9 and Falls City on Thursday, the new 10-year contract charges a rate of \$2.25 per 1,000 gallons for up to 400,000 gallons.

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INDEPENDENCE NEWS

If Humpty Dumpty had protection from the young physicists in Greg Craven's class, he may have survived his fall from the wall.

Or maybe not.

Many of the 35 eggs dropped from roughly 80 feet did not survive. Jello, peanut butter and flour all were unsuccessfully used to help lessen the impact.

The unfertilized embryos were dropped in contraptions designed by Central High School juniors in Craven's physics class on March 9. Polk County Fire District No. 1 assisted at the scene with its ladder truck and firefighters doing the actual dropping.

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MONMOUTH NEWS

After hearing Jean Love read the laundry list of things Kimber Townsend has participated in, she was a little overwhelmed.

"I just sat there for a second thinking, really?" Townsend, 44, said with a laugh. "Reading through that list, I thought, who did they talk to to get that list? I never ran through things on a list like that before."

She was doubly overwhelmed to be honored as First Citizen at the 50th annual Monmouth-Independence Community Awards Banquet Friday at Eola Hills Winery.

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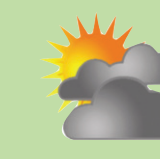


POLK COUNTY NEWS

Fifth-year programs at Dallas, Central and Falls City — and other districts throughout the state — appear to be on the chopping block if a bill slated for a public hearing Thursday in the Oregon Senate Committee on Education is approved.

Senate Bill 322 as currently written would create a funding formula for fifth-year programs, but language will be replaced Thursday with an amendment that will phase out the programs by 2017.

Dallas' version of the fifth-year program, Extended Campus, has students defer receiving their diplomas.

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THE NEXT 7 DAYS PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK 	wed Head down to the Rogue Farm Hop-yards for some family-friendly bingo. Dogs are always welcome, too. 6:30 p.m. Free.  Mostly Sunny Hi: 63 Lo: 41	thu Network with other business people at the MI Chamber after hours mixer at Arena Sports Bar and Grill. 5:30-7 p.m. Free.  Partly Cloudy Hi: 67 Lo: 44	fri Grab an instrument or just head on down to Guthrie Park Community Center to listen to a jam session. 7-10 p.m. Free.  Rain Hi: 60 Lo: 44	sat Listen to the stylings of Callaghan on piano and guitar at Spirit Mountain Casino in this 21-and-older show. 8 p.m. \$10-\$15.  Showers Hi: 60 Lo: 40	sun Today is National Goof Off Day, so do something fun and a little goofy and have a good time, regardless of the weather.  Partly Cloudy Hi: 62 Lo: 44	mon New Horizon's Orchestra is open to anyone 40 and older who wants to learn to play an instrument. 6:30-8:30 p.m. \$25.  Rain Hi: 56 Lo: 44	tue Every Tuesday, James2 Community Kitchen offers a free meal. Everyone is welcome to attend and dine together. 4:30-6 p.m. Free.  Showers Hi: 57 Lo: 42
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