



HAUGEN'S GALLERY/for the Itemizer-Observer
Library Manager Krist Obrist accepts the Nonprofit of the Year award on behalf of Monmouth Public Library.



HAUGEN'S GALLERY/for the Itemizer-Observer
Heidi Leppin (center) presents veterinarians Robert and Laura Archer with Business of the Year.

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF SERVICE

Monmouth, Independence honor people, businesses making a difference

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

RICKCREALL — After hearing Jean Love read the laundry list of things Kimber Townsend has participated in, Townsend 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 Wine Cellars.

"The first time you're nominated for something, you don't expect to win it," Townsend said.

Townsend has a reputation for getting a project done, said Love, executive director of the Monmouth-Independence Chamber of Commerce.

Her involvement in the Monmouth and Independence communities spans from helping develop and volunteering at Nite Court, organizing and serving as chairwoman of the Western Days Commission, coordinating the Independence Neighborhood Watch program, developing the Halloween Safety Zone, and serving on the Western Oregon University Presidential Search Committee.

While working full time at WOU for the dean of the College of Education, Townsend's "second job," as



HAUGEN'S GALLERY/for the Itemizer-Observer
Kimber Townsend accepts the award for First Citizen from Jean Love at Friday's 50th annual Monmouth-Independence Community Awards Banquet at Eola Hills Wine Cellars. Community members packed into the barrel room for the event.

she affectionately describes it, is working as program coordinator for the Polk County Community Emergency Response Team.

Townsend said her upbringing probably has something to do with her active involvement in the community. Growing up the daughter of a young widow — her father died in Vietnam when she was 2 — they moved around a lot.

By the time she enrolled at Central High School as a sophomore, she had changed schools 13 times.

"I told her (her mother) I'm never moving again," Townsend recalled. "I rarely

had close friends, never had time to get involved. So I stayed here and got super involved. My focus is in making this the best place ever."

She has passed that spirit of service to her daughter, Megan Stutzman, who was awarded one of two Junior Citizens. Michael Willis also won the award.

Stutzman was nominated for her work in her school community at Central High School, Scott McClure said when presenting the awards Friday night.

She has followed her mother's footsteps and volunteered more than 200

hours with Polk County Teen CERT, growing the program to 15 members in three school districts.

"Her cross-school community building is unique in the Polk County area," McClure said.

Stutzman also has helped establish an Academic Decathlon team at CHS, the first in the state of Oregon, McClure noted.

With all the pair have done, there's always more to do, Townsend said.

"There's never time to sit back and cool our heels," she added.

For more, see the *Itemizer-Observer* at www.polkio.com.

And the Winners Are ...

Award recipients from the 50th annual Monmouth-Independence Community Awards, held Friday night at Eola Hills Wine Cellars in Rickreall:

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS:

First Citizen — Kimber Townsend.
Junior Citizen — Megan Stutzman and Michael Willis.
Distinguished Service — David Ritchey.
Educator of the Year — Adrienne Gault.
Educator Support Staff Employee of the Year — Tracy Barnes.

BUSINESS AWARDS:

Business of the Year — Ash Creek Animal Clinic.
Food and Beverage Service — San Antonio Mexican Restaurant.
Nonprofit/Organization — Monmouth Public Library.
Professional Service — MINET.
Personal Service — Ash Creek Animal Clinic.
Retail Service — Roth's Fresh Markets.



HAUGEN'S GALLERY/for the Itemizer-Observer
David Ritchey is recognized for his volunteerism through Monmouth Police Department as a reserve officer, as well as efforts at communitywide events year-round.



HAUGEN'S GALLERY/for the Itemizer-Observer
Megan Stutzman and Michael Willis were each named Junior Citizen of the Year. They were recognized for their individual efforts in community service.



HAUGEN'S GALLERY/for the Itemizer-Observer
Cec Koontz hugs Adrienne Gault, who was named Educator of the Year for her efforts to help lessons come alive for her students at Talmadge Middle School.



HAUGEN'S GALLERY/for the Itemizer-Observer
Tracy Barnes accepts the award for Educator Support Staff Employee of the Year for her ever-present optimism to everyone from grumpy students to stressed teachers.

Senate Bill threatens fifth-year programs statewide

Hass says bill would phase out community college offerings in high schools by 2017

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — 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 bill sponsor Sen. Mark Hass (D-Beaverton) said that 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 even though they have met all graduation requirements.

Because they are still enrolled in high school, the state pays for their education and that money is used for classes at Chemeketa Community College. Programs at Falls City and Central work similarly.

Hass said the idea behind the phase out is to replace fifth-year programs with a model offering free community college to all students earning a high school diploma.

He said the benefit of that is the funding source — about 75 percent of the funding would come from the federal government, mostly through Pell Grants.

The state would offer the balance to students, minus \$50 per class they would have to pay. That concept is included in Senate Bill 81, which is also before the education committee.

Hass said fifth-year programs are "robbing" the state's K-12 fund

to pay for college classes, but understands why districts have provided these opportunities.

"If I were a superintendent of a small district, I would look at this, too," Hass said. "Their hearts are in the right place."

Hass said the districts who have the programs aren't big enough to jeopardize K-12 funding, but if larger districts jumped on board, it would quickly become a problem.

Local school officials say the conversation shouldn't be just about dollars and cents. "I don't see this as a financial issue," said Central Superintendent Buzz Brazeau. "Instead of talking about what is best for kids, we are talking about money."

Brazeau said the programs —

Central has 16 students in its first-year program — provide a "bridge" to college for students who would struggle with the adjustment from high school.

"I think there are a lot of kids that don't make it (through college)," Brazeau said. "A fifth-year program gives them knowledge they can do it."

Dallas' program, which has enrolled 472 students since 2005-06, has classes specifically designed to help students make that transition.

DHS Assistant Principal Brian Green, who oversees the program, said the direct result of that is the program's nearly 80 percent retention rate beyond the first year.

"There would be kids who wouldn't have access to college if Ex-

tended Campus goes away," Green said. "This is not about money, it's about kids."

Green also is concerned about taking the programs away without a guarantee that Senate Bill 81 will be approved.

Falls City Superintendent Jack Thompson said he understands the concerns about funding.

But he argues that, for small districts, a fifth-year program is a way to offer students opportunities that they would have in larger schools, as well as encourage students to look at college as an option.

"The fifth-year program for small schools has been fabulous," Thompson said. "It has allowed us to get kids to college who wouldn't have gone to college."



Hass



Brazeau



Green



Thompson