

Boyack shares the magic of theater

Volunteer awarded Honorary Thespian of the Year for her dedication

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

INDEPENDENCE — Wendy Boyack has a passion for live theater, and has been sharing that love with students at Central High School for nine years.

It's a passion she has carried with her since third grade.

"Our school district bused us over to the high school and we watched 'Godspell,'" Boyack recalled. "That was my first exposure to live theater, and I said, 'I want to do that.' To me, it was magic."

Boyack was honored as one of three nationwide recipients of the Honorary Thespian of the Year award. She will be presented with the award at the national convention in Muncie, Ind., this summer.

Thespian awards are generally reserved for students or teachers, Boyack said. But the honorary award recognizes the long hours she puts in volunteering for Central High's performing arts department — and the contribution she makes to teach theater skills to CHS students.

Boyack uses her technical skills behind the scenes — set and lighting design, stage makeup, painting techniques — and helps performing arts teacher Jeff Witt direct plays and musicals.

She uses students as her "crew," passing on her skills to them, training them on how to work the stage and manage productions.

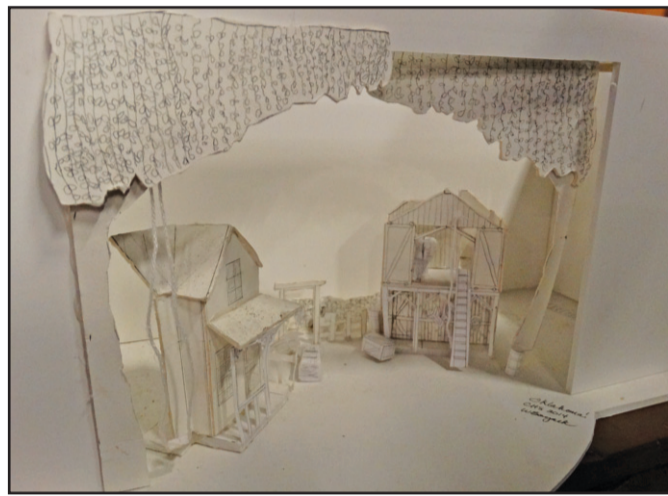
Boyack's experience includes working lights at concerts in Bend to managing the student theater at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, where she graduated with a bachelor's in theater with an emphasis in directing.

Now Boyack spends her time volunteering not just at Central, but also at Pentacle Theater and at Children's Educational Theatre in South Salem.

"I have a passion for what



Wendy Boyack is dedicated to teaching students at Central High about the magic of live theater. She was named Honorary Thespian of the Year.



Wendy Boyack designs all the sets for Central High's performances. Sets, like this one from "Oklahoma!" start as miniature masterpieces.

theater can do for kids," she said. "I see overall that live theater is a dying art."

The blame for what Boyack sees as the death of live theater is the fault of the theater community, the media and the audience, she said.

"They (the theater community) are contributing to their own death by insisting on their own agenda rather than listening to what their public wants to see," she said.

At Oregon state theater

conventions, CHS is known as the "princess school," Boyack said, because of the frequent "princess shows" the school puts on.

"We listen to what our public has to say," she said. "People come in droves to see princesses. Who cares if it's a princess show if it's paying for our program."

The audience contributes to the death of theater by having more frequent experiences with technology.

"We are losing touch with

interpersonal relationships," Boyack explained. "That one-on-one experience of human beings is almost gone."

The "bigger and better" mentality of media makes it harder for live theater, Boyack said.

"It's not like you can explode a stage," she said. "Well, you can, but it's kind of hard — and expensive."

It's because of her strong beliefs in the magic of theater and the importance of human-to-human interaction that she spends much of her time teaching students.

"I dedicate everything I've got to teaching kids about the magic in live theater," she said.

Boyack has never dreamed of being the star of the show; she prefers being in the director's seat.

"I look at the set and the lights and the people and everything as my medium for creating my own personal interactive sculpture," Boyack said. "I watch a play I've directed, or watch my set in action, or watch the lights happen in action, and I have great satisfaction in seeing my sculpture live and moving."

Districts fifth-year programs OK, for now

SB 322 dies in committee

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

SALEM — A bill that would have phased out fifth-year programs in school districts throughout the state — including three in Polk County — will not move forward.

Thursday the Oregon Senate Committee on Education decided to carry the bill forward, essentially killing the bill. While the legislation is dead, that doesn't mean the issue behind it is: using State School Fund money to pay for college courses.

Committee Chairman Arnie Roblan (D-Coos Bay) said he will be watching progress on the topic closely.

"It is, in my opinion, not sustainable," he said of the current funding mechanism. "I'm committed to finding the avenue for a solution to this."

Dallas, Central and Falls City all have fifth-year programs of various sizes.

The programs have students defer receiving a standard high school diploma in order to pursue an advanced diploma and attend classes at a community college. Because they are still high school students, the State School Fund pays for the courses.

When the legislation was introduced, school officials in the three districts in Polk County and elsewhere in Oregon were concerned the opportunities offered students through fifth-year programs would end due to the source of the funding.

Students and school district administrators from high schools across the state and their community college partners offered hours of testimony against the bill at a public hearing on March 19.

Now, it appears legislators and school officials from districts with the programs will have time to

work together on a proposal to keep them.

"As I have told the very vocal people in my district who feel very strongly about SB 322, I have not known anybody to be more of a champion for higher education access than (bill sponsor) Sen. (Mark) Hass, and I recognize the motivations behind that bill," said Sen. Sara Gelsler (D-Corvallis), who also sits on the committee.

"I think the fifth-year programs in our districts are really serving kids really well. We have seen some great outcomes. I'm very interested in finding a way to continue them."

She said the schools in her district, including Corvallis and Albany, which offer fifth-year programs are willing to help hash out new legislation that protects the State School Fund and fifth-year offerings.

"They have committed ... to begin discussions about this issue immediately, even before the session is over, to start this conversation to come back with a recommendation for the February session to look at how do we build on what's there in a way that is sustainable," Gelsler said during Thursday's bill work session. "I want to say thank you for that accommodation in giving us some time to do that."

Brian Green, the Dallas High School assistant principal who oversees DHS' fifth-year program, Extended Campus, said the district would like to be involved in those discussions, as well.

In the meantime, though, Green said he's happy to be able tell students there will be no changes in the program, at least for now.

"We can say that next year's Extended Campus will be business as usual," he said. "I'm sure there will be a lot of relieved families."

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Ivy: Grant provided funding

Continued from Page 16A hopes of keeping the ivy at bay for two years, Teller said.

LWC received a grant from Meyer Memorial Trust for the clearing project, something the council had wanted to do for a number of years. Teller said the partnership with the school was the last piece needed to get the project off the ground.

She said the council has been searching for more opportunities for educational outreach and, given the park

is just minutes away from LVCS middle school campus in Pedee, it seemed a natural fit.

"And the partnership with the school made it a stronger (grant) application," Teller said, adding the day was so successful, the council will likely try to find more opportunities for students. "We will definitely be calling on these guys again."

LVCS teacher Daniel Shimek said the ivy-clearing project gives his students "a

little sense of community" and prepares them for the community service projects they may have to tackle in high school or college.

Seiber sounds as though he will be ready, though he may want to pick a project that keeps him indoors next time.

"It makes me want to go out and do more stuff," he said. "But I don't think ivy is my thing — or pulling weeds. I think mowing the lawn is the best I can do outside."

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