



Students who have been shot by Josh (center), played by Jacob Eschette, haunt him while he is in jail with all the things they will never do because their lives have been cut short by his actions.

Students give up-close look at shootings

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

INDEPENDENCE — As Josh sits in his cell, he is surrounded by the spirits and voices of the fellow students who he killed in the school cafeteria earlier that day. They replay the events leading up to and including the school shooting, and get angry about the stuff they'll never do. Well, Josh will never do anything he dreamed about, either, as he is locked forever in a cell, haunted by his friends whom he shot to death.

The story of school shootings is, unfortunately, not as uncommon as anyone would like. In "Bang, Bang, You're Dead," the students of Central High School's production class, directed by Jeff Witt and Wendy Boyack, address the topic and ask questions about why it happens — and how could it be stopped.

Reba Hoffman, who plays Katie, one of Josh's victims,

A must-see

What: Central High School Drama Students Showcase and presentation of, "Bang, Bang, You're Dead," by Von William Mastrosimone

When: 7:30 p.m., Wednesday (today), Thursday, Friday and Saturday

Where: CHS auditorium.

Admission: The show is free, with a \$2 requested donation to help pay for students to attend the regional and state theater competitions.

Of note: Because of the content, this show is recommended for those middle-school aged and older. The first part of the show, students will practice for the regional acting festival, to be co-hosted by CHS on Feb. 6. After an intermission, students will perform, "Bang, Bang, You're Dead." A counselor will be available after the performance to facilitate a discussion, answer questions and offer advice. The play was written in response to the school shooting at Thurston High School in Springfield in 1998 and addresses the possible causes and consequences of school violence.

Reporter's note: Bring a handkerchief.

said she has gotten more excited about the play since rehearsals have moved from the classroom to the stage.

"The script alone was really emotional," Hoffman, a senior, said. But having everyone on stage makes the play even more powerful.

"This is definitely the

most intense show I've been in," she said. "Of course, other shows are intense in different ways. The anger and the sadness we have to pull into this show is unlike any other."

Jacob Eschette, who plays Josh, said the play spoke to him upon first reading.

"I automatically saw the beauty in this," he said. "I connect well with things that are dark and make people uncomfortable."

It's not just about being uncomfortable, Eschette, a senior, said.

"People don't realize that people don't just snap one day," he said. "It's a journey. It makes us realize what happens when people reach their limits and when people feel alone."

Junior Rynn Hastings, who plays Emily, another of Josh's victims, said the play has become more personal to her since rehearsals moved to the stage.

"A lot of (Josh's) internal feelings, I relate to — feeling differently," she said. "I'm taking my own experiences of what I would miss if I were deceased."

Hastings said the play shows how many people are affected when tragedy strikes.

"I'm so proud of everyone in the cast to do this play in this town," she said.

Fagin is 'Distinguished Educator'

DALLAS — Lyle Elementary School first-grade teacher Stacy Fagin was named Dallas School District's January Distinguished Educator.



Fagin

Fagin was nominated by Lee Letsch, a parent of two students from her class.

"I can honestly say she is one of the best teachers they have had," Letsch said. "Her willingness to adapt her classroom lessons and try new strategies continually demonstrates her motivation towards her students."

Her students had similar feelings about Fagin, saying: "She's amazing," and "She lets us have extra recess."

The Distinguished Educator Program recognizes "excellence in teaching and learning" in Dallas School District schools.

Monmouth's senior center plans delayed

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — After receiving bids on the Monmouth Senior Center expansion project, the city has put a hold on the idea.

"The market disagreed with our original estimates," City Manager Scott McClure said. Those estimates were a couple years old, and inflation may have played a roll in the difference between projections and what the bids turned out to be.

"The market's going up, but it came in quite a bit more than we expected," he said.

The lowest bid was \$497,000, McClure said. The project was estimated — and budgeted — at \$445,000, which was raised through the Friends of the Senior Center, grants, and money from the city's budget.

"If you put a proper contingency on that, that gets to \$571,000," McClure said. "So we are quite a ways off."

The next step is to do what's called "value engineering," he said.

"The architect and building official will say is there something we could do differently, adjust something, change something, make it easier for the contractor so



MONMOUTH GOVERNMENT

they can lower the price," McClure said, adding that the project has already been stripped down from its original plans.

Once that is done, he said they may have a choice to go back to some of the organizations who granted money to the project and ask for more, but, "They'll want to see we've done our homework first," McClure said.

The city will have to spend the money sooner than later to keep the grants received, McClure said, but communication is key.

The project was awarded a \$90,000 grant from the Ford Family Foundation, \$40,000 from the Meyer Memorial Trust, \$30,000 from Oregon Community Fund and \$15,000 from the Collins Fund.

The 2,133-square foot addition was expected to be completed this year, after 10 years in the making.

No timeline exists for completion at this point.

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