

SCHOOL NOTES

OCA to hold an informational meeting

MONMOUTH — Oregon Connections Academy, the free online public charter school, will have an informational meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday (today) at Monmouth Public Library, 130 Ecols St. S.

The meeting is a chance for families to explore the academy's program and online school curriculum. They can also speak with school representatives, and prospective and currently enrolled families.

For more information: www.oregonconnectionsacademy.com.

Jones heads to spelling championship

SALEM — Caleb Jones, of Sheridan, will represent Polk County at the annual Oregon Statewide Spelling Championship at the Oregon State Fair from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Saturday.

Students competing in the championship have won their school, district and county written spelling contests.

This is the eighth year Oregon Spellers has sponsored the championship. Oregon Spellers is an all-volunteer group paid for by donations and sponsored by the Oregon Association for Talented and Gifted.

The group was formed after the Oregon Department of Education ended its support for the spelling contest in 2009.

For more information: oregonspellers@kaynor.net, or oregonspellers.org.

ACADEMIC HONORS

Dressel earns bachelor's degree

SPOKANE, Wash. — Jerusha Dressel, of Dallas, has been awarded a Bachelor of Arts in political science and French, Summa Cum Laude, from Whitworth University.

Dallas student receives scholarship

COQUILLE — Jessica Fenton, of Dallas, is one of eight students who received a scholarship from First Community Credit Union.

Through the Founders Scholarship, six Oregon high school students and two Oregon college students were awarded \$1,500 each to help with the cost of higher education.

The awards were based on academic achievement, accomplishments and an essay.

The scholarship was established in 1999. More information on how to apply for the 2017 Founders Scholarship will be available in January.

For more information: myfirstccu.org.

Alzayer takes part in showcase

UNIVERSITY CENTER, Mich. — Riyan Alzayer, of Monmouth, was one of 32 Saginaw Valley State students chosen to demonstrate a practical approach to mechanical engineering design at the SVSU Summer 2016 Engineering Showcase on Aug. 12.

Alzayer is working on a project for a local entrepreneur involving a pump-action handle that controls the speed and brakes on wheelchairs.

Mechanical engineering majors collaborate with outside agencies as part of a senior project required before graduation.

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JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Nathan Gilbert, front, and Seth Hammond work as part of the Falls City School District's seasonal maintenance crew.

Summer crew expands reach

Falls City program hires six to seven students during summer

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

FALLS CITY — As summer jobs go, Kenny Graham can't think of a better one than working on the Falls City School District's seasonal maintenance crew.

This is the second summer Graham, a senior, has worked with the maintenance group under the supervision of John Gilbert, the facilities manager.

Graham said the work, which ranges from weeding to painting to waxing floors, is "exhausting, but fun." He's thinking of making it a career, especially if he gets to keep his boss.

"I would rather work with John than anyone else," he said.

Falls City expanded the program last year to employ six or seven students, up from one or two in previous years. In return for working an average of three days a week, the students are paid for two days per month — about \$150 — and get an elective credit.

"There's not a lot of jobs (in Falls City)," Gilbert said.



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer
Tracy Young, left helps students work on Aug. 24.

He said he's grateful the district prioritized funding to expand the program, which gives students something

positive to do in the summer and helps his three-person maintenance crew through the busiest time of the year.

District officials have noticed a difference in the schools — and the kids.

Superintendent Jack Thompson said at a recent Falls City School Board meeting that the students "have done an absolutely amazing job."

"That money that we've budgeted to continue to pay those kids to work a couple days a week, it's having benefits beyond just giving a kid a job in the summer," Thompson said. "They are growing as individuals."

This year's team includes: Graham, Kobe Smith, Phoenix Brown, Chris Doyle, Nathan Gilbert and Seth Hammond. Like any other summer job, they had to apply for the position, which offers both a first job experience and class credit.

Crew members say one of the lessons they have learned is how much work it takes to make sure the school buildings are in working order. Now, they want to keep them that way.

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