

SCHOOL NOTES

WOU ranks highest in college report

MONMOUTH — Western Oregon University is ranked 19th among top public schools in the regional universities category by the U.S. News & World Report's 2017 higher education rankings released on Sept. 13. WOU is also ranked 67th overall in regional universities. Both marks are the highest among Oregon's public universities.

For more information about the rankings: www.colleges.us-news.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/western-oregon-university-3209.

Group calls for investment in tests

SALEM — A legislatively required work group that evaluates the state's Smarter Balanced end-of-year assessment released a report with recommendations for considerations by the State Board of Education.

The report calls on the state to invest in a comprehensive suite of tools to ensure students, educators, and families receive a more holistic picture of their child's knowledge and skills through quizzes, activities, and interim assessments.

The report, which was approved by 33 education leaders from school districts and other organizations and was required by 2015 House Bill 2680, also recommends that the ODE reach out to parents and communities to better explain the purpose of statewide summative assessments and the need for comprehensive, balanced assessment systems.

For more information: <http://sos.oregon.gov/audits/Documents/2016-21.pdf>.

Salem Health donates backpacks

SALEM — Salem Health, which includes Salem Health West Valley in Dallas, gave out 370 backpacks filled with school supplies to students in need in Polk and Marion counties.

This is the third year of the giveaway, which has Salem Health asking area schools for their supplies list and its employees purchasing the items to donate.

"We set a goal to collect 200 backpacks this year," said Ralph Yates, Salem Health's chief medical officer. "Our staff blew away that goal by donating 370 backpacks loaded with school supplies."

The backpacks were delivered to schools and given out during "back-to-school nights" or when students registered for school.

Scholarships open to military spouses

POLK COUNTY — National nonprofit Hope for the Warriors has opened its Spouse/Caregiver Scholarship application period for spring 2017.

The Spouse/Caregiver Scholarship program identifies, recognizes, and rewards military spouses and caregivers.

Scholarships include: Honorary Scholarship — awarded to those seeking graduate or post-graduate degree; New Beginnings Scholarship — awarded to those pursuing entry level classes or training; Restoring Family Scholarship — awarded to spouses of the fallen; Restoring Hope Scholarship — awarded to a masters of social work student; and Restoring Self Scholarship — awarded to those seeking any undergraduate degree.

The application process for the spring 2017 scholarships will be open from Sept. 1 to Oct. 31. Scholarship winners will be announced mid-December on www.hopeforthewarriors.org.

To apply go to www.hopeforthewarriors.org/transition/spouse-caregiver-scholarships/.

For more information, email scholarships@hopeforthewarriors.org.



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Students at Ash Creek Elementary School chase after their hot air balloon on Sept. 21.

Project helps students lift off

By Lukas Eggen
The Itemizer Observer

INDEPENDENCE — The sky over Ash Creek Elementary School got a little more colorful on Sept. 14.

Teacher Dale Claussen helped three fourth-grade classes and one fifth-grade class launch handmade hot air balloons.

The event was the talk of the school — with other classes coming out to watch the big launch — but it also taught the students some valuable lessons along the way.

"It introduces them to energy transfer, density, mass and other scientific principles," Claussen said.

Just as important was the process it took to get their balloons ready.

"It's so effective because they have to work as a team to solve problems together," Claussen said.

The students worked together to make their balloons and to try and patch up holes during the launch so their balloons could fly over and over.

As the balloons took flight, the students chased after them with glee.

And even when things didn't go according to plan — three balloons



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Teacher Dale Claussen (center) and students watch as a balloon catches fire.

caught on fire — reactions ranged from regret to excitement over seeing the quick blaze.

The biggest lesson Claussen hoped students took away had little to do with science, though.

"They have a lack of self-confidence," Claussen said. "They think

that it was wrong or if they didn't do it perfectly that their balloon wouldn't fly. I want to get these kids away from 'it has to be perfect to be good' to 'it has to be good enough.' I want the kids to achieve something to get greater self-confidence and be willing to take healthy risks."



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