Aladdin: Story has 'good message'

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"Beggar becomes prince, tries to impress everyone, but realizes that if he was just himself from the beginning, he could have gotten the girl in the end," he said.

Lewis said the story is relevant to modern society.

"The technology's coming in and taking over everyone's lives," Lewis said. "Just being whoever they are online or on the internet. I think it's about time we put those down and think about ourselves and each other."

Lewis plays the infamous Genie, first immortalized by Robin Williams. Having such big shoes to fill has been great for Lewis.

"I kind of love having something to live up to, because it gives me something to work toward," he said.

It drives him to continue making his character "fantastically extravagant and flamboyant," Lewis said.

"I'm supposed to be this blue guy who comes out of a lamp," he said. "How do you build this giant character that's out of something maybe that's not considered to be that big?"

Taking notes from Williams, Lewis said he throws in accents and characters whenever he can — and he improvises jokes, too.

"I'm doing Yoda, Elmo, Capt. Jack Sparrow — anything I can fit in there whenever I can," Lewis said. "Say something as a character and make everyone laugh a little. My goal is to make the ones up top in the spotlights laugh a little bit. They're not supposed to, so I know if I make them laugh, I'm doing my job."

EMILY MENTZER/ Itemizer-Observer

Guards try and hold Aladdin, played by Joel Robison, during a rehearsal.

Lewis is no stranger to larger-than-life roles, but "Aladdin Jr." has presented a challenge in how long he has to keep it up.

"I have nothing to do for the first 15 minutes, then the whole rest of the show I'm running around constantly," he said. "It's hard work, but it pays off in the end."

Santillan said seeing the show is a must.

"It's Disney, and it's always amazing to see magic come into real life," she said. "And it's really nice to see the meaning behind it. It kind of shows it doesn't matter what side you come from, whether you're a princess or a street rat, it doesn't matter because we all feel the exact same way, whether we're higher up or lower down. You can stand up to bullies. You can do what you want if you believe in it. It's just a good message."

Arabian Nights

What: Central High School Performing Arts presents, "Aladdin Jr."

Where: Central High School auditorium, 1530 Monmouth St., Independence.

When: Wednesday through Saturday, 7 p.m. Saturday includes a chance to have lunch with the cast before a 2 p.m. matinee. The play also runs Wednesday, May 17, through May 20 at 7 p.m. with a 2 p.m. matinee. Audience members are invited to sing along at the May 20 matinee performance.

Admission: General, $8; students, $5.

DSD schools to have busy building summer

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Schools in Dallas School District are heading into a summer of construction.

Contractors and district maintenance staff will be on a compressed schedule to complete nearly $7 million of work in three different schools in the time students are away. The projects — building multi-purpose cafeteria/kitchens at Lyle and Oakdale elementary schools and seismic upgrades at Whitworth Elementary — are paid for with either a voter-approved maintenance bond money or grant. Contracts for those were approved last month.

"We are in the process of reviewing those contracts and we're applying for permits for the three projects," said Kevin Montague, the district's facilities director.

He said the buildings are being prepped for the projects, work that included asbestos abatement at Whitworth over spring break. Getting that project out of the way allows construction to start immediately after school ends.

Montague said the project was organized and completed on time.

"We have a challenge coming at us this summer, but after what happened over spring break, I'm confident we have the right team in place," he said.

In other business, the district's Energy Incentive Program application is awaiting final authorization. The grant could bring the district as much as $900,000.

"We are currently looking at failing, end-of-life HVAC equipment replacement and district-wide LED lighting upgrades for this program," Montague said.

SCHOOL NOTES

WOU approves tuition increase

MONMOUTH — Western Oregon University board of trustees voted to approve tuition increases on a sliding scale, depending on how much money the state Legislature approves for public universities in its current session.

The increased tuition rates will affect students on the Traditional Plan in WOU's Tuition Choice program.

Depending on what is approved by the Legislature, tuition will increase by 5 to 10 percent.

ACADEMIC HONORS

Locals named to Phi Kappa Phi

BATON ROUGE — The following local residents were initiated into The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, the nation's oldest and most selective all-discipline collegiate honor society.

They were initiated at Western Oregon University.

Dallas: Maria Mccarthy.

Falls City: Serena LeBleu.

Independence: Eliana Belle, Ruth Yawata and Sarah Lilly.

Monmouth: Alison Nelke; Amanda Short; Britton Castor; Brook Cummings; Darryl Thomas; Dean Braa; Hailey Wren; James Masnov; Kjerstin Stanavige; Lindsay Spear; Mario Martinez Garcia; Marita Cardinal; Max Norr; Paula Baldwin; Robyn Lopez Melton; Sara Madden; and Sophia Dykast.

Salem: Jacob Dougherty, Marcy Premo and Rachel Culpovich.

These initiated are among about 30,000 students, faculty, professional staff and alumni to be initiated into Phi Kappa Phi each year.

Membership is by invitation only and requires nomination and approval by a chapter.

Polk students make honor roll

ADAIR VILLAGE — Santiam Christian Schools released its 2016-17 school year third-quarter honor roll.

The following are the Polk County students who made the list.

12th Grade — 4.0 GPA: Mikayla Manzi (Monmouth) and August Thornton (Independence). **3.5 and higher GPA**: Peggy Liang (Independence); Long Nguyen (Monmouth); Katie Richert (Dallas); Makenna Setniker (Dallas); Shao-en (Sean) Wang (Dallas); and Alexandra Watson (Dallas).

11th Grade — 4.0 GPA: Hoang Nguyen (Dallas); Kyle Paratore (Independence); Zachary Watson (Dallas); Jenny Wei (Independence); and Billy Zhang (Dallas). **3.50 GPA and higher:** Samuel Barton (Monmouth); Kaylee Breyman (Independence); Shawn Feng (Monmouth); Grace Moseman (Dallas); Sebastian Perfecto (Independence); Rebeka Preston (Independence) and Buckley Sheng (Monmouth).

10th Grade — 4.0 GPA: Carlos Garcia Palomar (Dallas); Tony Li (Dallas); Jason Manzi (Monmouth); Abby Riedlinger (Independence); Cole Setniker (Dallas). **3.50 and higher GPA**: Winn Miller (West Salem) and Isabel Montoya (Dallas).

Ninth Grade — 4.0 GPA: Ainsley Beam (Monmouth) and Amanda Preston (Independence). **3.5 GPA and higher:** Olivia Bellinger-Verbics (Monmouth); James Bodnovits Independence); Lily Hardy (Dallas); Trevor Oxenrider (Independence).

Eighth Grade — 4.0 GPA: Caroline Conolly (Dallas); Keilana Oxenrider (Independence); and Ben Steffen (Independence). **3.5 GPA and higher:** Cooper Brasel (Monmouth); Ann Livingston (Monmouth); Joshua Montoya (Dallas); Carolyn Wilfong (Monmouth).

Seventh Grade — 4.0 GPA: Ely Kennel (Monmouth) and Jamie Myrick-Duckett (Independence). **3.5 GPA and higher:** Adrien Barba (Dallas); Eli Cummins (Monmouth); and Abi Von Derahe (Monmouth).

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