

SCHOOL NOTES

WOU names Cassity new dean

MONMOUTH — Western Oregon University named Kathleen Cassity, of Honolulu, as the new dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Cassity is the assistant interim dean of the College of Liberal Arts at Hawaii Pacific University and also served there as chairperson of the Department of English and Applied Linguistics. She received her bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in English at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Cassity will begin work at WOU in August. Professor Rob Wingham filled the role of interim dean of LAS during the 2016-17 academic year.

Whitworth awarded seismic grant

DALLAS — Whitworth Elementary School received a second grant to make seismic improvements to the school's gym.

The \$700,160 grant brings the total amount the school has received for seismic upgrades to about \$2.2 million.

"For Whitworth, that will take care of the entire building," said Kevin Montague, the district facilities director.

Oregon's Seismic Rehabilitation Grant Program, managed by Business Oregon provided the funding. The program rewarded \$153.6 million in grants for school and emergency services facilities. Of that total, \$125 million went to schools.

DSD board praises Supt. Johnstone

DALLAS — The Dallas School Board commended Superintendent Michelle Johnstone in her annual review, approved April 24.

The evaluation recap letter, written by board member Mike Bollman, listed 10 of Johnstone's accomplishments during the 2016-17 school year, including her efforts on communication and transparency, building relationships in the community, and positive interaction with the district's unions.

"We look forward to working with Michelle on our mutually agreed upon goals for the upcoming year," the evaluation letter read. "Overall, the board commends Michelle Johnstone for her outstanding leadership and positive efforts to bring continuous improvements to our schools."

McDonalds awards school grants

INDEPENDENCE — Randy and Alicia Beaulaurier, local McDonald's owner/operators, have made contributions totaling \$2,776 in grants to schools to support academics and promote the growth of arts and athletics programs in Albany, Dallas and Independence.

Each grant will be applied to academics, athletics, or art, depending on the specific needs of each school, with principals and teachers being involved to ensure the grants have as large an impact as possible.

Polk County school programs that received funding include LaCreole Middle School, STEM — \$650; and Talmadge Middle School, Choir — \$650

Anderson is 'Community Educator'

SALEM — The Oregon Association of Community and Continuing Education gave Chemeketa instructor GwenEllyn Anderson its Community Educator of the Year award at a May 3 event.

A student from Andersons French for Travelers class nominated her for the award, citing in the entry, "GwenEllyn is probably the most creative teacher I have ever had. She presents the material through lecture, interactive games of various sorts, videos, and dialogue, to name a few of the things she has used."

Anderson has worked at Chemeketa since 1991 and was among the first faculty to teach online classes for the college.

The French for Travelers class is just one of the hundreds of noncredit classes Chemeketa offers the community each quarter. For more information: 503-399-4949.



EMILY MENTZER/Itemizer-Observer

Dylan Lewis rehearses a scene as Genie during Central's production of "Aladdin Jr."

A land full of magic

Central High School presents Disney's 'Aladdin' through May 20

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

INDEPENDENCE — Salaam and good evening, worthy friend.

Take a journey to the magical land of Agrabah, where a young street rat and princess meet under less-than-honest circumstances, have adventures with a flying carpet, meet a powerful genie, and find that love conquers all — even social status.

Central High School will perform Disney's classic, "Aladdin Jr.," opening Wednesday (today) at 7 p.m. The musical will run for two weeks, Wednesday through Saturday and May 17 through 20.

Lizabeth Santillan, who plays Jasmine, is excited to perform "Aladdin Jr." It comes with mixed emotions, as this will be her last show on Central's stage.

"It didn't really kick in until a couple days ago when we put on the little preview for the little kids," she said. "It's an awesome play to end with because it's



EMILY MENTZER/Itemizer-Observer

"Aladdin Jr." opens Wednesday (today) at Central.

full of magic."

She also is eager to perform the role of Jasmine — a "sweet girl who just wants her freedom," Santillan said. Previous roles she has played have been on the nasty and mean side, she said.

One of the challenges for the actors in Aladdin is singing and dancing.

"It's really hard to stay on the right note, on the right key, and not run out of breath when you're doing

big moves," Santillan said. "But in the end, it's worth it. Everybody loves it. They eat it up, and it's amazing to see them praising our hard work. It gets tough, but it's beautiful and we all love it."

Actors Joel Robison and Dylan Lewis, Aladdin and Genie, respectively, have even more work to do when it comes to song-and-dance numbers.

"I'm on stage the majority of the time, and the first

opening numbers run into each other, so I'm kind of exhausted and dying of sweat after," Robison said.

The role of Aladdin is more than physically demanding for Robison.

"It's been a crazy ride for me as far as it's more emotionally exhausting than I had anticipated," he said. "I had a lot of empathy for Aladdin, and I have more in common than I thought when I was cast as the role."

Robison, a junior, said that even though Aladdin is a cartoon, he has a story to tell that is very much applicable to real life.

"We've all worked super hard to make sure it's as true as we can to what we believe the story's trying to tell," he said. "That's the whole purpose of acting. We're telling the story for a reason, for people to hear it. Without people to hear it, our art form is going to be obsolete. And we have a good story to tell."

Lewis said that story is about being true to oneself.

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