

Helping students get ahead

Homework Club on Wednesdays is also available

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant Union Junior-Senior High School has a four-day school week, but the school is still filled with students working to catch up and stay ahead with their studies on Fridays.

The school is open to students from 9 a.m. to noon on Fridays, and teachers are usually available in their classrooms.

Friday Academy, held in the library, offers extra assistance to students in grades 7-12.

Career coordinator and English teacher Elizabeth Shelley and special education teacher Eva Vaughan meet with about 25 students each week for Friday Academy.

"It's provided for kids to have intervention for those that need the extra help, and it's provided by the school," Vaughan said.

She said they mainly help the students with math, history and English.

"We also help them with organization and tracking assignments and staying on task," Shelley said.

Peer support is also available through the program.

Seventh-grader Cowen Weaver helps others with math, and eighth-grader Maddie Whitmore also assists students with homework and helps with games and snacks and cooking. Both said they enjoy helping the other students.

"They might feel more comfortable with someone their age because they might be nervous around adults," Whitmore said.

After completing home-



Students work together to form a pyramid of cups without using their hands during Friday Academy at Grant Union. From left, Cowen Weaver, Zinny Locke (behind), teacher Eva Vaughan, Mariah Kerr, Emma Schlarbaum and Riddick Hutchison.

work in the library March 16, about 12 students in grades 7-9 gathered in another room for a game and yogurt parfaits.

Divided into two groups, the students competed to see which team could first move plastic cups into a pyramid using yarn and a rubber band, without touching the cups.

The games are "centered around team building, critical thinking and processing activities," Shelley said.

Students are specifically invited to join the extra game and snack activity, but Vaughan said if a parent is interested in having their student involved, they can call her at the school.

Besides Friday Academy, there is also a Homework Club on Wednesdays after school until 4:30 p.m. in the library.

Vaughan wants parents to be aware of the extra help available.

"If the kids are utilizing these opportunities, then we can look at them, across the board, and see if they need



A team of students tops off their pyramid of cups to win. From left, Maddie Whitmore, teacher Eva Vaughan, Dalaney Coombs, Dakota Ballou and Kendra Hatkoff.

more help than that," she said. "If you have a kid that is struggling, we want them to know we're here to help them — this is 100 percent for the kids."

Vaughan added, "We look for the needs of the students.

If a parent thinks their child needs that extra help, then contact Mrs. Shelley, (Principal Ryan) Gerry or me."

For more information, call the school at 541-575-1799, ext. 25 for Shelley, ext. 21 for Gerry or ext. 20 for Vaughan.



Contributed photo
Grant Union senior Jeffrey Hensley stands with a load of blankets and stuffed animals he collected for local foster kids for his senior project.

A heart for foster kids

Senior project brings comfort to foster kids

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

Local foster kids will receive comfort items such as blankets and stuffed animals through a caring senior project called Comfort for Kids.

Grant Union High School senior Jeffrey Hensley set up collection boxes at a few local businesses for a month, gathering several loads of fluffy teddy bears and plush blankets.

For Hensley, the project meant much more than fulfilling a graduation requirement. He said he'd like to make his career in child protective services.

"I just wanted the experience of helping foster kids," he said.

Hensley gathered items from the collection boxes each Friday and delivered them to the Department of Human Services in John Day.

"They will be distributed to foster kids going to new homes, and this is going to help them because it will

provide comfort for those first few nights staying in a new home," he said. "That's why I called it Comfort for Kids."

He added, "My brother and two sisters and I were adopted and knowing that feeling helped to come up with the idea."

He said the project has helped him narrow down his career path.

"Knowing that feeling of helping foster kids helped me know that it would be a good field to go into," he said.

Heather Edgar, office specialist at the Department of Human Services in John Day, said Hensley's service is appreciated.

"A lot of times when kids come into care, they don't get to bring all their belongings," she said. "It's nice to give them something soft and snugly to ease into the situation — just something to hold onto."

Edgar said the office doesn't always have the money to purchase comfort items, and sometimes the availability is limited in the area.

"It's nice to have a supply that we can draw from," she said.

Grant Union automotive class gets under the hood

Students learn to repair head gasket

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

A bright orange sign in the Grant Union Junior-Senior High School shop classroom reads "Putting America Back To Work."

Eleven students in Jason Miller's automotive class have been using some elbow grease for their latest project — replacing the head gasket of a 2002 Toyota Highlander.

"It's a common problem, especially with high-mileage vehicles," Miller said.

All the students took turns under the Toyota attempting to remove a final bolt, including Luke Claughton.

"The difficulty is the bottom bolt is near the brackets," Miller said, adding it makes it a tight area to work in.

Once it's removed the class planned to either mill the warped part or replace it.

Claughton said he has experience working on different types of vehicles.

"Motorcycles, cars, four-wheelers — a little of everything," he said.

Bank of Eastern Oregon donated the Toyota to the



Automotive teacher Jason Miller speaks with students under the hood of an SUV the class is working on, senior Josh Carpenter at right.

class, and Doug's Auto Repair & Towing donated the tow to the school.

Caleb Rand was also under the vehicle lending a hand to Claughton. Rand said he's learned some mechanic skills from his dad.

"He teaches me how to take stuff apart, and I hand him the tools he needs," he said.

Miller said this is the first time in several years the class has been offered.

He said Measure 98 was a bill that gave Oregon schools incentive to improve their Career Technical Education.

"I'm taking the class to learn how to diagnose vehicles," said Dillon Maley. "It's been a fun experience

learning all the new skills."

Freshman Clara Carr said she's learned to change oil and tires.

Next up, the class planned to learn to change a fuel filter and put a new engine in a Jeep.

"They're motivated," Miller said. "It's a good group, and I'd like to see it continue."



Grant Union students, from left, Josh Carpenter, Drew Lusco, Clara Carr and Cauy Weaver visit while learning about mechanical repairs for a Toyota Highlander in their automotive class.



Grant Union student Luke Claughton is under a Toyota Highlander in automotive class, working to remove a hard-to-reach bolt.

Legislative education committee takes issues on tour

By Paris Achen
Capital Bureau

A legislative committee tasked with improving the state's public education system will visit Eastern Oregon April 24 and 25 as part of its statewide tour.

Baker City and Hermiston are the second and third stops of the Joint Committee on Student Success.

The first stop was March 22 at Sheldon High School in Eugene.

Public hearings are scheduled for 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 24, at Baker High School and 7 p.m. Wednesday, April 25, at Hermiston High School.

Lawmakers said they want to hear from students, parents, teachers, administrators and other community members about what is and isn't working in their schools and in the broader public education system.

"We want to hear from Oregonians about what they want in their K-12 schools. We want to know where we're succeeding, where we are falling short and how we can bridge the gap," said committee Co-Vice Chairman Sen. Tim Knopp, R-Bend. "With that vision, the Legislature can work in partnership with our school districts to create an efficient education system that best

serves our students."

The 14-member bipartisan committee is charged with learning about successful educational practices around the state and coming up with legislative strategies to address the state's chronically low four-year high school graduation rate. The state's on-time graduation rate is 74.8 percent, the third worst in the nation.

That could include legislation to reform educational funding or accountability measures that tie educational funding with certain measures of performance, said Rep. Barbara Smith Warner, a Portland Democrat.

"We are not here to re-

form education because education already suffers from a lot of flavor of the month," said Warner, who is co-chairwoman of the committee. "Everybody has their next great idea about how to reform education."

"Our goal is not to come in and say, this is what you should do districts. It is to say, how do we set up funding structures and accountability structures for every district to make the system work for them?"

The committee is modeled after a bipartisan effort lawmakers used to develop a \$5.3 billion transportation funding plan they passed last year.

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