



Dancers kick off state competition with Spring Showcase

Grant Union Gold competes Saturday in Portland

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Grant Union Gold dancers wowed the crowd Friday at their annual Spring Showcase with team, duo and solo performances.

Dancers took the floor at Grant Union Junior-Senior High School, showing skills they've learned over the past six months of practice, while also celebrating their kick-off to the OSAA Dance and Drill State Championships.

The team will travel to state competition on Friday, leaving the school at 9 a.m., performing at approximately 5 p.m. Saturday at the Portland Veterans Memorial Coliseum.

Head coach Kattie Piazza said she's coached several of her team members since sixth or seventh grade. Brandi Hicks is her assistant coach this year.

The 10 Gold dancers started off Friday's event performing to "The Greatest Show," the theme song from the movie "The Greatest Showman."

In the routine, both Leah Comer and Celine Hicks are lifted up in the air by teammates.

Performing solo in a contemporary, lyrical style were Brianna Majors, Leah Comer, Shanniyah Hall, Celine Hicks and Ali Chobo. Chobo and Andrea



Grant Union Gold dancers lift Leah Comer in their first performance at Thursday's Spring Showcase, dancing to the theme of "The Greatest Showman."

Comer also took the floor for a hip-hop number, which Piazza said is a favorite form of dance for both girls.

All solo and duo numbers were choreographed by the girls performing them.

The finale was the big reveal of the state competition dance, the team dancing to "Whatever It Takes" by the band Imagine Dragons with a theme of "Breaking Free."

Piazza said they still

had a little more to add to it for state. Again, the choreography included Leah Comer and Celine Hicks held up by teammates in the performance.

Andrea Comer, Celine Hicks and Ali Chobo were recognized as seniors on the team.

Emilie Updegrave, a junior, said she was happy with the outcome for the evening as well as the season.

"We have worked really



Grant Union Gold dancers Andrea Comer, left, and Ali Chobo perform a hip-hop routine at the Spring Showcase.



Grant Union Gold dancer Leah Comer performs a solo routine, dancing to "Skyfall" by Adele.

hard for this, and I personally think this is the best year we've had in a while," she said. "This team has meant so much to me because everyone loves dance so

much and is here for a reason."

Sophomore Brianna Majors was also pleased.

"I think we performed strongly tonight," she said.

"I think we're ready for state."

The 2A Gold dancers are in for a challenge Saturday, as they compete against schools in the 1A-4A class.

"It's one of the toughest divisions in the state," Piazza said, adding Grant Union is the only 2A team taking the floor.

She said some of the teams have dance as a year-round sport, and some score as high as 6A teams.

Although competition will be tough, looking forward, Piazza remains hopeful.

"We have one of the best-conditioned teams in the state of Oregon," she said. "It takes a lot of strength, energy and emotion."

Special Olympians face law enforcement for basketball fun

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Grant County Special Olympics Miners challenged the law enforcement team in a basketball showdown Thursday evening at the Prairie City School gym.

"The crowd was generous and supportive," said Miners head coach Dave Hoeffner.

He said shooting the ball, rebounding and defense were key in their preparation.

"The team worked hard this year," he said. "Their skill level has improved."

He said two of his players were unable to play this year, and he hopes they'll be able to join them next season.

John Day Police Chief Mike Durr said the event was fun.

"I think next year we'll practice more, and we'll be ready for them," he said.

JDPD Officer Andrew Martin said he's had some experience coaching basketball in Baker City.

"I love basketball and helping other people enjoy basketball," he said.

Joining the action on the law enforcement team were Oregon State Police Detective Erich Timko and Trooper Jake Reeves and Grant County Search and Rescue volunteers Sam Palmer, who is also a Grant County commissioner, and Pastor Randy Johnson of the John Day Church of the Nazarene.

Miner Caleb Madsen



Grant County Special Olympians and their coaches and other volunteers pose with the law enforcement and search and rescue members after their basketball game on Thursday in Prairie City. Front: Referees Darrel McKrola, left, and Ray Wenger; middle row (black and white shirts), Brian McKrola, Charley Fronapel, Katie Shockley, Elizabeth Swarthout, Caleb Madsen (behind Swarthout), Jannet Hoeffner, Crystal Wimberley and Josiah Hoeffner; back row, Pastor Randy Johnson, Oregon State Police Trooper Jake Reeves, unified volunteer Jason Leighton, OSP Detective Erich Timko (with hat), John Day Police Department Officer Andrew Martin, JDPD Chief Mike Durr, Pastor Levi Manitsas (announcer), Grant County Commissioner Sam Palmer, Special Olympics coach Dave Hoeffner and Special Olympics coordinator Deronda Lallatin.

scored two 2-pointers and three 3-pointers for the night. He said it was "cool" when Johnson threw him a rebounded ball, which led to Madsen scoring 3 points.

"It's not about who's the best. It's about having fun," Madsen said.

"I enjoyed that the law enforcement officers came out and played with us," said Miner Crystal Wimber-

ley. "Our team has worked really hard this year, and it really paid off. We hope to come back here next year."

Other Miners team members were Brian McKrola, Charley Fronapel, Elizabeth Swarthout, Josiah Hoeffner and Katie Shockley, and all contributed in scoring.

The annual basketball game is the main fundraiser for the local Special Olym-

pians, and the funds go toward their travel and uniform expenses.

Special Olympics assistant coaches and unified partners were Jannet Hoeffner, Jason Leighton, Lauri Shockley and Deronda Lallatin.

Other volunteers were Pastor Levi Manitsas of Cornerstone Christian Fellowship as announcer and refer-



Grant County Special Olympian Caleb Madsen (15) high-fives referee Ray Wenger, and Crystal Wimberley runs down the court in the game against law enforcement on Thursday night in Prairie City.

ees Darrel McKrola and Ray Wenger.

Lallatin and Kathy Jo Gill are local co-coordinators for the Grant County Special Olympics program.

The team's next sport is soccer with practices starting up in mid-April at the Seventh Street Complex.

On June 7-8 the local Special Olympians will compete at Providence Park in Portland, home of the Timbers.

Lallatin said they welcome more to join the Special Olympics team, as well as those who would like to play as a volunteer unified member (someone who plays the game, supporting the Special Olympics team members). For more information, call Lallatin or Gill at Sue Z Q's Thiftstore, 541-575-0715.



Grant County Special Olympian Elizabeth Swarthout takes aim during halftime warmups against the law enforcement team.



Haillie Wright



Kaylee Wright



Madi McKrola



Tristan Morris



Jacob Vaughan



Tanner Elliott

Blue Mountain Conference All-League recognition

Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant Union girls basketball

Haillie Wright, senior, first team
Kaylee Wright, senior, first team
Madi McKrola, senior, second team

Grant Union boys basketball

Tristan Morris, junior, first team
Jacob Vaughan, senior, second team
Tanner Elliott, senior, second team

SPORTS SCHEDULE

Friday, March 15

Long Creek, Prairie City track and field at Diana Thurmond Invitational in Harper, 11 a.m. (MT)

Grant Union softball vs. Burns, 1 p.m., 3 p.m. (may be postponed to Saturday pending field conditions)

Grant Union baseball hosts Ice Breaker Tournament vs. Mac-Hi, 2 p.m. — CANCELED

Saturday, March 16

Grant Union baseball hosts Ice Breaker Tournament vs. St. Paul, 2 p.m. — CANCELED

Grant Union dance @ OSAA Dance and Drill State Championships, Portland, 5 p.m. (approximate time)