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Ione student earns 2012 fireman of year

By Andrea Di Salvo

One Ione senior is out to prove that, no matter the obstacle, a passion can become a dream fulfilled.

Stewart Syverson, 18, recently earned 2012 Fireman of the Year from the Ione Rural Fire Protection District. Despite his age, and a potentially debilitating disability, Syverson is no cadet...the Ione High School senior is a full-fledged firefighter.

When asked why he thought he received the award, Syverson said it was because "...I have been going through all my trainings, attending all my meetings and attending every single call I can go to."

Ione District Fire Chief Virgil Morgan agreed, but summed it up in one word... dedication.

"He is taking the Firefighter I training at the academy, doing that since last September," says Morgan. "He's been very good at doing that; he's very dedicated to graduate from the academy. He's just really dedicated. Every time we have a call he's always there. He's just a good one to have."

Firefighting doesn't appear to have been a boyhood dream of Syverson's. Rather, he says, one of his mother's coworkers asked if he would like to become a firefighter, because the Ione fire district needed cadets. That was about two years ago, when Syverson was a sophomore in high school.

"I was pretty nervous about joining but, once I joined, I fell in love with it," says Syverson. "Without the support of my fellow firefighters...I would not have received the award and wouldn't still be a firefighter today."

Firefighting wasn't just love at first sight; it has turned out to be a long-standing commitment. Not only does Syverson work as a firefighter with the Ione fire department, he has also been taking Firefighter I training through Oregon Trail Fire Training Association, an academy based in Pendleton.



Ione senior Stewart Syverson with his 2012 Fireman of the Year award from the Ione Rural Fire Protection District. -Photo by Paula Emmel

He has been spending his spare time in the physically and mentally demanding training, which, he says, requires online schooling every Tuesday night and a trip to either Hermiston or Pendleton once a month for hands-on training. The hands-on portion of the training ended just last month, but Syverson still has two online classes to go before graduating from the academy in April. Apparently, the training has been going well.

"I was talking to one of the instructors the other day and he said they're really impressed with him," Morgan says. "I think he's one of the top students in the class."

Add to that a full-time senior class load, football, and being manager for the Cardinal boys' basketball team, and you might think Syverson has enough on his plate.

"I really like spending time with my friends. I really did like football. My schedule is pretty hectic sometimes," he admits.

The final and most dif-

icult hurdle, though, comes in the form of the condition he battles. Syverson has cerebral palsy.

According to the U.S. National Library of Medicine, cerebral palsy is "a group of disorders that can involve brain and nervous system functions, such as movement, learning, hearing, seeing, and thinking." In Syverson's case, the disorder affects the movement on one side of his body, something he is determined not to let slow him down.

"It did (affect my training) in the beginning," says Syverson. "I was very frustrated and blamed everything on my disability. I just pushed myself through it and now I'm in the top 10 percent of the class, getting my gear on, and doing it with a disability that affects the whole right side of my body."

Morgan agrees that the disorder doesn't seem to hold back the teenager.

"He's always been there and does everything we've asked of him," says Morgan. -See IONE STUDENT FIREFIGHTER/PAGE TWO

County Korean War vets honored



Morrow County Korean War veterans were recognized during a town hall meeting held by Senator Ron Wyden on Feb. 17 at the Port of Morrow in Boardman. Pictured (L-R) are: Sam Scott, David Zachary, Senator Wyden, Grace Baker, Gene Doherty, Ed Baker, Billy Adams, Jerry McElligott and John Jepsen. -Photo by David Sykes

Mustang girls head to state

Trample TigerScots for final state spot

In the Blue Mountain Conference basketball tournament at the Pendleton Convention Center last weekend, the Lady Mustangs from Heppner faced a potentially season-ending game against the Weston-McEwen TigerScots on Friday.

The girls responded with an 8-0 run in the beginning of the game to set the tone for the Mustangs. Heppner ended the first half with a 25-21 lead as the TigerScots attempted to work their way back into the contest.

In the second half, the third quarter went to the TigerScots, who outscored the Mustangs 15-8 to take the lead 36-33. Into the fourth quarter, though, the Mustangs' pressure-man defense stepped up, holding Weston to three points in the fourth quarter to regain the lead and take the win 47-39.

The win clinched a state playoff game for the Mustangs and ended the TigerScots' season.



Coach Jeremy Wilson (center) huddles with the team to talk strategy during the Heppner game versus Weston-McEwen last Friday night in Pendleton. -Photo by Sandy Matthews

Bennett led scoring with 21. A. Wilson had nine, Greenup and Lindsay each added six, and K. Wilson scored five points for the Mustangs.

Saturday's game pitted the Mustangs against the Union Bobcats for third place in the BMC league. Looking worn out from the previous day's game, the Mustangs struggled offensively in the first quarter of play, down 13-5.

The second quarter showed the Mustangs fighting back, not losing

ground but not gaining, for a halftime score of 23-15 to Union.

In the third quarter, the Mustangs used all their remaining energy, playing solid defense to stop the Bobcats in their tracks. A run by the Mustangs, with some outside shooting by the guards and rebounding efforts inside, tied the game at 27 halfway through the third.

Finally, in the fourth, Union's offense took over. -See MUSTANGS TO STATE/ PAGE THREE

Wrestlers win four district championships

Six Mustangs to compete at state this weekend

The Heppner wrestlers competed in Crane Saturday in the 12-team Special District 4 championship. Even though the Mustangs only took nine wrestlers to fill 14 weight classes, they finished third as a team, one point behind second place Imbler. Imbler had no champions and two state qualifiers.

All nine Heppner wrestlers won matches at the tournament and all scored bonus points with pins. Every Mustang stood on the podium for their weight class and received a medal for placing in the top six.

Ryan Smith (106 pounds) started the team off with a win in the very first match of the tournament, pinning his Wallowa opponent in the third round.

Smith went on to claim third place by winning a tight 3-2 decision in the consolation championship over an opponent he had lost to three times over the regular season.

Will Lutchter (120 pounds) also placed third for the Mustangs, winning the consolation championship in a high-scoring 19-13 match.

Jesse Boyd Placed sixth at 138 pounds.

Six Mustang wrestlers, Jared Lemmon (126 pounds), Alex Smith (132 pounds), Treston Maben (145 pounds), Earl Propheter (160 pounds), Tim Nelson (195 pounds) and John Propheter (285 pounds) qualified for the district championship bout in their weight classes. It

was Lemmon's third trip to the district finals and Nelson's second, while it was a first-time experience for the other four.

The 126-pound championship match pitted two returning district champions and state finalists, Jared Lemmon and Austin Roath from Crane. Lemmon bled from a facial cut and Roath from his nose as both wrestlers used a substantial amount of allotted blood time throughout the match. The battle was tied at 7-7 after regulation and went into sudden victory overtime. Lemmon ultimately won his third district championship with a takedown.

Smith won in a domi- -See WRESTLING CHAMPS/ PAGE FIVE

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