



STAFF PHOTO BY JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN

Robby Shea, right, was an entrant in the Peace Poster contest. Here the Armand Larive Middle School student poses with his grandfather Armando Reyes at the Lions Club meeting.

Students envision a future of peace

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
STAFF WRITER

Four students were honored Wednesday, Dec. 6 for their thoughts on peace, and the way they encourage others to think about it too. The Hermiston Lions Club recognized the local entrants of the Lions Club Peace Poster contest, four students from Armand Larive and Sandstone middle schools. Students were asked to depict the theme “the future of peace.”

Jose Muniz, Moises Reyes Purcell, Robby Shea, and Amy Wooster were invited, along with their families, to the Lions’ meeting, where they were treated to lunch and got to display their posters for the club members. Each student received a certificate for their participation.

Wooster’s poster was the winning piece, and will now be submitted to the multi-district competition. She received \$25 for her win.

Lions President Pro Tempore Charlie Clupny said the contest has local, state, national and international levels. The winner of the international contest is invited with their family to accept the award with the United Nations.

“Our dream is that one day we hear that one of our entries had made it to the international competition,” Clupny said.

Wooster’s drawing, done in colored pencil, depicted a missile turning into a dove.

Wooster, a seventh-grader at Sandstone Middle School, said the piece took her a few weeks

of work. This is her second year entering the contest.

She said she was happy to move on to the next round.

“I don’t know if I’ll win, but it’s fun,” she said. Wooster’s parents, Sandy DeBano and David Wooster, said the whole family enjoyed thinking up potential ideas for posters, but this one was Amy’s.

“We wish there was an adult contest,” DeBano said.

The Lions Club also honored two community organizations, and awarded them with donations from a recent auction. The Blue Mountain Community College Foundation received \$11,068 from the Lions Club, to be used for the Precision Irrigated Agricultural Center.

The Lions also donated \$500 to Made to Thrive, a local organization that funds activities for students whose families can’t afford them, such as sports and music. The program is tailored to each student, and more than 300 kids in the community have benefited from the program.

The donation was from the Don Horneck Memorial Fund. Horneck was an agronomist who worked at the Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center. He passed away unexpectedly in 2014.

Phil Hamm, a Lion’s Club member, said a scholarship was set up in Horneck’s name after his passing, to help an Oregon State University agronomy student. The scholarship fund is now worth more than \$100,000, Hamm said.



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Hermiston High School junior Camden Gutierrez works on his pre-calculus homework after school Thursday at Hermiston High School.

Stanford, Yale, now Princeton

Student explores social justice, college opportunities

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
STAFF WRITER

Even though he’s not sure where his post-high school path will take him, the wheels in Camden Gutierrez’s head have been turning since he was in middle school.

“If you come from an underprivileged group, you have to advocate for yourself,” he said.

With a budding interest in social justice and a curiosity about what college has to offer, the Hermiston High School junior has spent summers educating himself about various courses of study, attending camps at colleges around the United States.

The first, two years ago, took him to Stanford University to learn about bioscience and biotechnology. He spent last summer at Yale University.

At that camp, Gutierrez said, the groups were divided up into “capstones,” each of which focused on issues such as sustainable development, social entrepreneurship, global health and international development. He was placed in a group that focused on gender equality.

“Everything centered around different goals,” he said.

Gutierrez already has another goal in mind for this summer — a seven-week program at Princeton University. The program, “Leadership Enterprise for a Diverse America,” admits

100 students from across the country who come from low-income or underrepresented backgrounds. The application, which Gutierrez is currently working on, is due Dec. 12.

“The program tries to target low-income kids who they know (are) capable of attending those schools,” Gutierrez said.

He said the camps are not so much a way to build up his résumé as to give himself an idea of whether he’d like to attend these schools, and to get a feel for the school’s ability to assist its students.

Gutierrez has received some scholarship funds to attend those camps, but has raised much of the necessary money on his own.

While he knows he wants to attend a private college and is interested in going to the East Coast, Gutierrez says he has much left to figure out — including what he’d like to study.

“At the moment I’m still lost like every other student,” he said with a laugh.

Gutierrez’s teachers have noticed a work ethic they’re sure will take him far.

“I’ve been teaching 11 years, and he’s certainly the most self-motivated student I’ve ever encountered,” said Tammy Fisher, Gutierrez’s Advanced Placement Language and Composition teacher.

Fisher said that to find his passion for the English language, Gutierrez has had to overcome some hurdles.

Fisher said Gutierrez began school only speaking Spanish, and was in the English Language Learners program until middle school.

She said he pays attention to nuances of language many would ignore.

“Prepositions are really hard for English language learners,” she said. “But instead of just picking one and going with it, he always takes the time to look it up or ask.”

Fisher has also noticed Gutierrez’s inclination toward social justice.

She recalled an assignment where the class was reviewing a news article about President Donald Trump’s plan to rescind protections for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals recipients.

“Camden was so interested in the content of the article that he did more research, and decided he wanted to further his response in the form of a letter to an Oregon legislator,” Fisher said.

Fisher said Gutierrez ended up sending his letter, which detailed his support for and perceived value of DACA, to Rep. Greg Walden.

She recalled another time when Gutierrez was looking out for others.

This fall, when Mexico was racked by earthquakes, he led the effort to raise funds for those affected.

“Camden stepped right in and researched relief organizations we could support,” Fisher said. Between his own efforts and his involvement with the National Honor Society, she said that he put together a coin drive and NHS is wrapping gifts that will go toward the project.

“He used his voice to be a voice for someone else,” Fisher said.

Gutierrez said he has been thinking about college since he was in middle school.

“My mom always

insisted that I continue to higher education, because she never had that opportunity,” he said. “So she kept pushing for her kids.”

Gutierrez said his father is supportive, but also wants his son to be realistic.

“Pretty much my whole life has to revolve around academics,” he said. “Growing up, it was regular for my dad to say, ‘We’ll go work on the farm,’ or ‘We’ll go pull weeds.’ There wasn’t a heavy focus on homework. He sees it as helpful to take the education path, but not something you can rely on.”

Gutierrez said while he understands that perspective, his views are a little different.

That view led him to join Generation College, which allows students to learn how to apply for college and scholarships and to visit local colleges and universities.

“Everyone there understands their circumstances, but they’re not going to let that define them,” he said. “Our standards are pretty high, but how can we meet them, regardless of the circumstances?”

Through involvement with that group, as well as the National Honor Society and Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America, Gutierrez has honed his leadership skills.

“(Camden) asked me yesterday about internship opportunities,” Fisher said. “He said he didn’t know what kind, but he really wanted to do something to make a difference.”

Fisher said she’s sure Gutierrez will do that, regardless of where he ends up.

“I expect nothing but amazing things from him,” she said.

Teachers concerned about impact of Washington schedule on academics

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
STAFF WRITER

Some Hermiston teachers are concerned the switch to Washington’s athletic conference is impacting the way the district makes academic decisions, a teacher said at Monday’s school board meeting.

Joshua Linn, a fifth-grade teacher at Rocky Heights Elementary School, said that two calendars were circulated to staff for the upcoming school year, and that on both schedules, the district’s spring break was now the same as Washington state’s — and different from that of the surrounding districts in Oregon.

Linn said many teachers were concerned that the switch to the same spring break as another state — which he said was to accommodate those

teachers that coach sports and will now be coaches in the Washington system, would negatively impact the teachers and students in the rest of the district.

“Teachers don’t have the same spring break as their children,” he said of Hermiston teachers who live outside the district.

Linn urged the board to be careful that they weren’t making decisions based only on athletics.

“It sounds like when you say, ‘do what’s good for the kids,’ it looks like ‘what’s good for sports programs,’” he said.

The board also hosted members of the Hermiston football team, which recently won the OSAA 5A state championship, and members of the Future Farmers of America veterinary science program, who recently took first place at the state competition and will now compete at nationals.

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