

EOL HONORS

Irrigon, Umatilla have first-team players

By ANNIE FOWLER
STAFF WRITER

Irrigon senior Ana Zacarias was named to the Eastern Oregon League first team, and freshman JaLay Burns to the second as the all-league selections were announced last week.

Zacarias averaged 13.8 points and three steals per game for the Knights (12-11). Burns averaged 13.3 points and 3.2 assists per game.

Sophomore Allie Hueckman of Burns was named MVP, and Hillanders coach Brandon McMullen took the coaching award.

Also named to the first team were Gracee Jacobs and Matyson Siddoway from Vale, Shai Skinner of Burns, and Samantha



Zacarias



Earl



Garcia

Moore of Nyssa.

For the boys, Umatilla junior Andrew Earl and senior Uriel Garcia were named to the EOL first team, while senior Trent Durfey was named to the

second team.

Riverside sophomore Francisco Barajas was named to the second team, as was Irrigon senior Keith Fleming.

Rounding out the first team are Omar Jaquez of Nyssa, Kade Haueter of Vale, and Dakota Ceja of Burns.

Nyssa junior Pedro Chavez was named MVP, while Bulldogs coach Aaron Mills took the coaching award.

EASTERN OREGON LEAGUE SELECTIONS

GIRLS

First Team

Allie Hueckman, so., Burns; Gracee Jacobs, sr., Vale; Ana Zacarias, sr., Irrigon; Shai Skinner, sr., Burns; Samantha Moore, sr., Nyssa; Matyson Siddoway, so., Vale.

Second Team

JaLay Burns, fr., Irrigon; Aundraya Ceja, so., Burns; Faith Rose, sr., Riverside; Taylor Durfee, fr., Umatilla; Alexia Arredondo, sr., Nyssa; McKenzie Hoyt, sr., Burns; Emersyn Johnson, so., Vale.

Honorable Mention

Brendy Avalos, sr., Riverside; Mileah Skunkcap, sr., Burns; Madyson Hartley, sr., Nyssa;

Kyla Wright, sr., Vale; Hailey Castro, so., Nyssa.

BOYS

First team

Pedro Chavez, jr., Nyssa; Omar Jaquez, sr., Nyssa; Andrew Earl, jr., Umatilla; Uriel Garcia, sr., Umatilla; Kade Haueter, sr., Vale; Dakota Ceja, jr., Burns.

Second Team

Zane Taylor, sr., Burns; Francisco Barajas, so., Riverside; Agustin Trujillo, sr., Nyssa; Tanner Hamilton, sr., Vale; Trent Durfey, sr., Umatilla; Keith Flemming, sr., Irrigon.



Contributed photo

Lil X-Rey, an up-and-coming rap artist from Hermiston engages the crowd during Feb. 15 performance at the Funhouse in Seattle.

Lil X-Rey soaks in music streams, live shows

By TAMMY MALGESINI
COMMUNITY EDITOR

The pulsating beat and poetic words of urban rap and hip-hop provided an escape from boredom for a 16-year-old Hermiston youth.

Lil X-Rey has parlayed his talents into hundreds of thousands of listens and gigs across the Northwest. A sophomore at Hermiston High School, Rey is interested in business and marketing as a way to promote himself in the future.

One of his classmates came up with the moniker Lil X-Rey from his given

name of Rey Rodriguez. The teen was the sophomore prince on the HHS homecoming court in the fall.

“It’s kind of a popularity thing,” he said about being crowned. “A lot of people know me for my music.”

While he used to play a lot of basketball, Rey spends a lot of his time these days writing lyrics. He admits he’s just an average student, instead focusing his energies on riding the wave of his popularity on music platforms, writing lyrics and performing at shows.

“I currently have over 250,000 streams of my music, 13,000 Instagram followers and have concerts all over Boise, Seattle, Tri-Cities and recently had one in Umatilla,” he said.

Rey started out performing with his friends and putting a couple of his songs on Soundcloud and other music plat-

forms. His first song attracted 1,000 listens within a week.

“I thought that was a lot,” Rey said. “Then one song did like 20,000 in a week.”

Currently, “Zooted Up,” a collaboration with Ghoulavellii, has more than 87,300 plays on Soundcloud. After networking with other artists in the region, he got the attention of promoters. Last spring, Rey said his first packed house performance in the Tri-Cities drew upwards of 500 people.

“My Hermiston area crowd and Tri-City area crowd came supporting me,” he said. “It just blew up from there.”

Rey is currently under a management company. He’s hopeful with continued success and additional knowledge, he can learn more about the business end of decision-making, managing and pro-

moting himself.

“I like making music,” he said. “I write all my stuff. I pretty much put on some LED lights for the mood and put on the beat.”

Many of his songs have the Parental Advisory label for explicit content. With lyrics featuring strong language and depictions of substance use, sex or weapons, Rey said it’s not really what he’s about.

“It’s just part of the show,” he said. “I don’t really smoke. I don’t do drugs. It’s just all part of the show. You know, it sells.”

Rey describes himself as a fun person who likes to make jokes and hang out with his friends. He’s excited about the future and a bit surprised by his success.

“It does blow my mind, though, because I’m from Hermiston,” he said.

Campus Life directors follow calling to teen ministry

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

Jeff and Ashley Umbarger know Campus Life can do good things. It’s where they met.

The husband and wife duo have been leading the nonprofit, which provides wholesome activities and hangouts for teens, since September. But when they were teenagers themselves (Jeff grew up in Pendleton and Ashley grew up in Hermiston) they spent plenty of time in the blue metal-fabricated building across the street from Hermiston High School.

“It’s really cool that we’re here doing this, because there are so many stories we have here,” Jeff said.

Jeff moved away after high school, but when he came back years later he looked Ashley up on social media and couldn’t believe she was still single. After asking a mutual friend to make sure she really was available, he asked her out for a day of four-wheeling and fishing. The rest, as they say, is history.

Although they had initially followed different career paths, both felt called by God to work with youth. They eventually ended up running Jubilee Leadership

Academy, a Christian boarding school for troubled boys in “the middle of nowhere” near Prescott, Washington.

The atmosphere there was different than Campus Life — it was all boys, who were being forced to be there. But Ashley said a lot of the experience she and Jeff got at Jubilee has helped them better relate to the teens that hang out at Campus Life.

“We had a lot of training relating to kids with a lot of hurts, habits and hang-ups,” she said.

Jeff said he learned to “look past the attitude” and realize that kids who were acting out were often doing so because something else was going on behind the scenes. Seeing former gang members from big cities get scared of coyotes or a rustling in the bushes helped him remember that even though they had seen a lot, they were still “just kids.” And there were students at Jubilee who started out trying to make his life miserable and later trusted him enough to confide about trauma they had experienced.

“You definitely have to have a heart for (working with teens),” he said. “You can’t just be doing it as a job.”

Now the Umbargers host



Photo contributed by Ashley Umbarger

Jeff and Ashley Umbarger have been directors of Campus Life since September. For photos of recent Campus Life activities, see A11.

high school night on Mondays and a newer middle school night on Tuesdays at the Campus Life building, plus take groups of teens out on weekends for snowboarding or rafting trips. They also open up the build-

ing after high school football and basketball games to give students a safe place to hang out together after the game.

On Monday, teens started to trickle in after 7 p.m. A group of boys and girls sat on a circle of couches, chat-

ting, while one teen grabbed dinner from the snack shack and ate it while scrolling through his phone. Other groups gravitated toward air hockey or ping pong, and a few sophomore boys started a game of pool.

At the pool table, Connor Carr, Logan Ham and Nate King said Campus Life provided a safe place where they could hang out with friends without being under the watchful eyes of their parents.

“It’s nice to slow down on a Monday,” Nate said.

Connor said he liked that the Umbargers were cool and “not very strict.” There are also more activities to choose from at the Campus Life building than at friends’ houses.

Logan appreciated the Umbargers, too.

“They’re really chill and easy to talk to,” he said.

After free time on Mondays and Tuesdays, students usually gather for some ice-breaker games and a 20-minute message. The high school night usually attracts about 30 students and the middle school nights sometimes get as many as 50.

Campus Life is an independent nonprofit not run by a specific church, but it does have Christian overtones. Sometimes the talks

at the end of the night discuss religious themes. Other times they show scenes from uplifting secular movies such as “Up,” then use it to discuss bullying, peer pressure or other topics relevant to high school and middle school students.

Jeff said Campus Life isn’t meant to replace church youth groups, and he and Ashley try to make sure they aren’t infringing on local church activities. But some students who would never set foot in a church are willing to come play pool with their friends and might hear a positive message about Christianity in the process.

Ashley said they are also planning on starting a Celebrate Recovery night on Thursdays that will help teens deal with addictions, bad habits and “hang-ups” they might have.

On Saturday, Campus Life is hosting a fundraiser dinner to support its mission. “The Gathering” will take place at 6 p.m. at the Hermiston Community Center, 415 S. Highway 395. Tickets are \$20 per ticket or \$140 for a table seating eight, and the event will include a silent auction, dinner and live music. For more information or to purchase tickets contact Ashley Umbarger at 541-969-1017.