



Photo contributed by Ashley Seibel

The Hermiston dance team poses with their trophy after winning the state championship in the "show" division on Friday.

DANCE

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Murphy's struggle to break free from the forest as the other dancers try to trap her and get her to stay.

"The audience gets really into it," Howard said. "That's our main goal — we're here to entertain."

The dance included props, such as a fence and trees to portray a sinister forest.

Howard said she's not sure what they'll do next year, but many of the dancers hope to stick with a heavier theme — something that she said set them apart from other teams this year.

"We like doing scary faces, and we'll probably do something dark," Howard said. "It tells a different kind of story."

Hermiston was one of three teams competing in

their division. Head coach Ashley Seibel said in order to go to the state competition, the team had to first qualify for the district competition, and then use that to qualify for state.

Seibel said this year brought a lot of changes for the dance team. In addition to competing in a new state, and in a division they'd never entered, they also had several new members join the team later in the season. Most of the team starts doing conditioning in June, and has a full nine-month schedule of 5 a.m. weekday practices, ballet lessons every Monday, and 8-hour weekend rehearsals. But when they decided to compete in the Show division, Seibel said they realized they would need more dancers.

"We had second auditions in October and November,

and had three girls try out with very little dance experience," she said.

Those students have since learned fast, she added.

"We had people quit at the beginning of the season, because they didn't realize how much work it would be," Howard said.

Howard said the beginning of the season was a little rocky, with a changing group and getting used to competing in a new state.

"When we competed in Oregon, we would have to travel really far, and often we'd have to stay in hotels," she said. "That was really fun — it was like a sleepover. We were worried we'd lose some of that now that we don't have to travel as much."

But she was worried for nothing. Howard said the team has been as close as

ever. "You have to work together when you're dancing," she said.

There were 39 teams that competed in the 1A, 2A, and 3A competition on Friday, and 34 teams in the 4A competition on Saturday.

Teams could compete in one of several divisions, including dance/drill, military, hip-hop, pom, and show, which includes using props. Seibel said Hermiston scored a 280.6 out of 300, and scored the highest out of all "show" competitors, including the 4A performances. The team is coached by Seibel, Jake Royer, Susan Stephens and Tori Espinosa.

"Our coaching staff couldn't be prouder of these kids," Seibel said. "This was the perfect ending to our season — a well-fought-for win."

TREATMENT

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to get people to even recognize they have a problem, let alone seek help.

When people first come in, he screens them, using questions that assess how gambling has affected their behavior, relationships, and finances.

"A lot of them at the beginning say 'no,' but as we break it down, they say 'yes,'" he said.

Iris said many people suffering from gambling addiction don't want help.

"Some people are lonely and go for the company," she said. "You're not really lonely, but you're not associating with people. A lot of people don't realize their problem."

For her, the thing that finally clicked was being able to go to treatment and talk about other issues that got to the heart of the problem, without a set timeline.

"The treatments I've had in the past, it was more like they were bullying you," she said. "They expect you to change in no time flat."

To break a pattern she's been in for 20 years, she said, is not that simple.

"A lot of people don't feel comfortable opening up about personal feelings or their family," she said. "This can't happen in one month or 60 days. It may take people longer than that."

Garcia said that treatment for gambling tends to be a more long-term process than for other addictions.

"There are people I've had for two years who still want to come back, because they feel they need to talk with someone, or they feel a connection with the group," he said.

Amy Ashton-Williams, director of Umatilla County Human Services, said there are three people currently enrolled in gambling treatment through the

county.

Ashton-Williams said training for gambling addictions counselors focuses a lot on helping clients recognize triggers that may cause them to reengage in addictive behavior.

"We don't always think about activities we engage in that can be triggering to gambling addicts," she said.

For example, if someone's office has a weight-loss challenge, and the "buy-in" is \$25, that can be a trigger.

Iris said the triggers can be related to other stressors like family or work, or they can be even more obscure.

"Somebody may not be triggered by seeing a bee on a flower, but to others it is," she said. "That's what I'm talking about. These are the little things that trigger people."

In Garcia's group at New Horizons, he said they work on understanding the root of addiction, both generally and specific to gambling. They talk about motivations to change, and things that may influence their behavior, like anger or loss. Finally, they learn about how to find balance in their lives, and finding other ways to spend their time and money.

Ashton-Williams said there's one unique aspect of gambling treatment that doesn't happen in other types of addictions counseling.

"In gambling (treatment) we're mandated to do financial counseling," she said. "When they start playing with money, all of a sudden money is missing, there's not enough to pay the bills."

Problem gamblers in Oregon can get help at 1-877-MY-LIMIT, or at www.opgrg.org.

Both Ashton-Williams and Garcia said gambling addiction can be hard to recognize, and the consequences aren't always immediate.



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