



A Christmas swan...



An addition to the wildlife at Vernonia Lake is this graceful swan, which has been feeding on the lake for about four weeks. It has been joined, occasionally, by a few other swans, but they were only passing through. Bald eagles have also been feeding at the lake.

Trees removed because of disease, safety issue

In the late 1950s and again in 1980, Vernonia High School students planted a mixed species grove of conifer trees on campus. Though the FFA and forestry classes involved in those years are no longer available to VHS students, the fir, pine and spruce trees continued to grow, gracing the campus during the past 20-50 years at the east end of the shop building.

No more. Overcrowding and disease have taken their toll and most of the trees have been removed.

One element is troubling, however – according to school board member Tim Titus, who was supervising as the trees were being felled on Saturday, Nov. 22, they were cut because "They aren't doing anything," and were being removed for a "wrestling building." When asked who approved constructing a wrestling building, Titus said "the school board, [Superintendent Mike] Funderburg, everybody."

He said nothing about disease, root rot or anything hav-

ing to do with the trees' condition.

In spite of repeated calls, The INDEPENDENT was unable to talk with school Superintendent Mike Funderburg on Monday or Tuesday and, with the Thanksgiving holiday coming up, called other board members for information.

Cari Levenseller said she had received several calls from district residents, asking why the trees were cut, but she hadn't been able to get any answers from the district office, either. When asked whether the board had approved a wrestling facility, she was emphatic: "That has not been discussed at a board meeting," Levenseller said, "and I haven't missed any."

Darrell Hamblet said "I don't recall ever having any discussion about a wrestling building. We have a lot of other things that should be done before a wrestling building." Hamblet called back the following day to say that board chair Jim Krahn reminded him that the Safety Committee had discussed the trees and approved removing them if they were dangerous. Hamblet served on the safety committee along with board member Randy Hansen, Super-

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Young gymnast is statewide champion

Madeline O'Leary, of Vernonia, walked away with the State All-around Championship in the 7-8 age category during the Oregon State Gymnastics Championship, November 22 at the Multnomah Athletic Club in Portland.

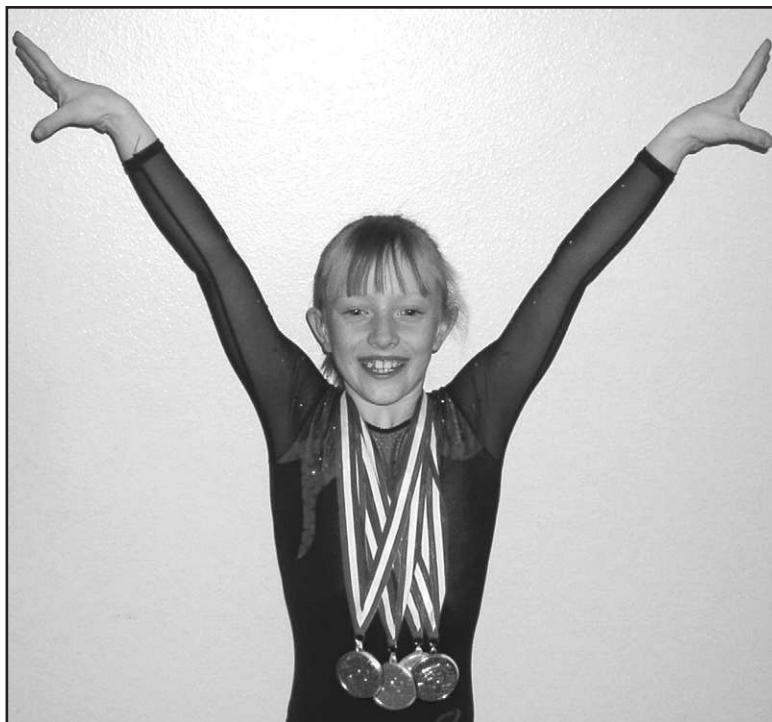
Madeline's Level 5 team from the Oregon Gymnastics Academy in Beaverton had finished first in seven previous meets this season. That record remained unblemished as they placed first out of 29 teams in the State Gymnastics Championship.

Individually, Madeline finished first in the 7-8 year-old bars event and first in the vault

event, before taking the All-around Championship in that age category. Twice during the regular season she had finished second in the All-around, so she saved her best performance for the State Championship.

Madeline is the daughter of Peter and Leslie O'Leary. She is a third grader in Ms. Judy Gingrich's class at Lincoln Grade School and has been involved with gymnastics for three years. This was her first year of competitive gymnastics.

Madeline O'Leary is all smiles after winning the All-around Championship for 7-8 year-old Oregon gymnasts.



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Toy & Joy
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