

Court of Appeals hears cases at Banks High School

With the icicle and snow laden scenery for Banks High School's production of *Snow Angel* in the background, the cafeteria didn't look like a courtroom. But a courtroom is exactly what it was February 21, when four cases were heard by the Court of Appeals for the State of Oregon. A panel of three judges heard the cases. One was Darleen Ortega who has seen the cafeteria many times before; Ortega graduated from Banks High School (BHS) as valedictorian in 1980.

This year's seniors were required to attend the court session as part of their government studies. Social Studies teacher Doug Ainge arranged the opportunity for them. The session was also open to the public.



Since 1997, the Court of Appeals has operated a program to hear cases in all parts of the state, instead of just in Salem. Most of the hearings have been

in local high schools. This allows Oregon citizens, particularly students, to better understand Oregon's court system, as well as allowing local lawyers to present their appeals in a more convenient location.

Bailiff Jill Howell opened the session by explaining that the cafeteria was no longer a cafeteria and that the rules of the courtroom applied. These rules included no eating, drinking or gum chewing, no wearing of hats, no talking, no sleeping, no cell phones and no slouching. After turning off a few cell phones, students complied with

the rules and were ready with questions during the question and answer period held after the first two cases.

The Court of Appeals hears approximately 2000 cases per year, with each three-judge panel hearing one-third of them. Ortega said that the court usually will hear 10-14 cases in one day. Opinions are written for all cases that are reversed. If the decision is upheld, an opinion may or may not be written. Occasionally, complicated cases may require the opinion of all ten judges on the court. The outcome of Wednesday's cases won't be known for about 45 days.

The Court of Appeals differs from lower courts in that it makes no findings of fact. The facts of each case are established by the initial trial. What the court looks at is interpretation of points of law. In the first case heard at BHS, the admissibility of evidence gathered during a traffic stop was debated. Other cases looked at public space definitions, admissibility of voice recordings and the limitations of a wrongful death suit. Three of the cases were criminal and lasted 30 minutes; one civil case lasted 60 minutes.

Banks Fire wins special award

Banks Fire District #13 was awarded the 2007 Outstanding Special District Program Award, on February 10, by the Special District Association of Oregon (SDAO).

The SDAO provides an extensive range of services to special districts all through the state. The SDAO award program commemorates the ingenuity, creativity, and diversity of the members involved.

The Outstanding Special District Program Award identifies ground-breaking programs, exceptional safety, public information, public participation in a district decision-making process, and outstanding project/ achievement.

Banks Fire District received this honor for the high school student firefighting program established in 2001. Since the program started, Banks Fire has graduated over 50 students. Students of the program have the opportunity to earn the equivalent of 30 college credits. This curriculum teaches students the skills to become career firefighters and emergency medical technicians. Nine students have gone on to receive degrees in fire science or paramedics.



Food collected by Banks Elementary students during the week of February 12 was unloaded on February 21, prior to being delivered to Sonrise Church.

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