Excelsior recognizes outstanding students

Excelsior High School recently launched a Student of the Month program called “Phoenix on Fire”. Students of the Month exemplify the characteristics staff would like to see all Excelsior students achieve. Excelsior students are striving to become: inspiring, responsible, and respectful, and to have great attendance, an excellent work ethic, and a positive attitude.

February’s Phoenix of the month is Randee Schneider. Congratulations Randee!

You’ll love what you see when you “Like” us!

Follow breaking news and celebrate student, teacher and school achievements by “Liking” the Washougal School District Facebook page. And be sure to “Share” any story you find interesting! You can also visit your school and district websites for important, up-to-date information.

Find us at: www.facebook.com/WashougalSD

Buy a brick and “make turf happen”

Washougal High School is in need of a new turf field at Fishback Stadium. Installed in 2002, the field has reached its life expectancy and needs to be replaced. In an effort to raise money for the turf’s replacement, the WHS Turf Campaign Committee is selling bricks for the creation of a “Panther Walk” to be installed over the summer of 2013 at the entrance to Fishback Stadium. Bricks can be personalized with up to 3 lines of text (17 characters per line) on a 4x8 brick ($100) or 5 lines of text (17 characters per line) on an 8x8 brick ($500 for individuals/families and $1,000 for business/corporate donors). Cash donations in any amount are also welcome and corporate/business sponsorships are available.

What a wonderful way to honor your child, spouse, or family member who attended or worked in Washougal schools. To buy a piece of history and support your local high school, visit the Turf Campaign website at whsturfcampaign.com. If you would like to see how the campaign is progressing, please “like” their Facebook page “Washougal HS Turf Campaign.”

LET’S MAKE TURF HAPPEN - GO PANTHERS!

As a result of a community wide strategic visioning process conducted last year, the Washougal School Board will soon be adopting a new mission and vision statement for the school district. The process confirmed the importance of providing students with a broad range of activities and opportunities to inspire their learning, tap into their natural talents, and to stretch their potential. In addition to classroom instruction and the many clubs and activities that extend student learning beyond the school day, the district has remained committed to a strong athletic program. Young boys and girls participate at both the middle school and high school level in sports that include football, volleyball, basketball, wrestling and track. Additional sports opportunities offered at the high school include soccer, tennis, golf, cross-country, softball, baseball, equestrian competitions, and cheer. Thanks to local support through levy dollars, hundreds of children get involved in programs that teach the value of teamwork. Daily work, with a significant and caring adult, helps children learn to recognize the value of hard work, the importance of keeping physically fit, and how to handle wins and losses with grace and maturity. In the process, commitment, strength, and tenacity are developed in our youth. The impact of these programs on students’ engagement in school and academic achievement can be measured in their success. Our regional sports league awards special recognition to school teams with students whose academic grade point averages fall about a 3.0 or “B” average. Recognition for distinguished academic achievement was awarded to our varsity boys and girls basketball teams, C-Girls basketball, and varsity and junior varsity (JV) cheer. The JV girl’s basketball team received an outstanding academic award for holding an average 3.75 grade point average for the team. This year 59% of our fall athletes and 53% of our winter athletes achieved a GPA of 3.0 or higher.

The Panther boys and girls wrestling teams ended their season at the WIAA Mat Classic at the Tacoma Dome, and our boy’s basketball team fell just short of qualifying for a spot in the State Tournament this year. My pride in our athletes’ accomplishments and sportsmanship and my appreciation of their coaches and parents could not be higher. The Washougal community can take great pride in the athletic program that is shaping our youth in so many positive ways. Their academic learning is just the strong foundation on which we are building healthy, engaged, and resilient citizens of the future.
American Sign Language flourishes at Washougal High School

Students in Washougal High School's American Sign Language class come away with more than just a language skill that could help them get a job or lead to a career. They also learn to appreciate diversity and gain understanding of the deaf culture.

Tami Grant, a WHS graduate, is the ASL teacher at WHS and a nationally certified interpreter. She started the program as a part-time teacher in 2006-07 with a handful of students and has grown the program to approximately 150 students studying their first to fourth year of the language.

The WHS ASL Program was showcased with performances in January at the Washburn Auditorium. Students took to the stage and signed the words to popular songs, complete with some costumes, props and choreography.

"ASL is a visual language and I wanted to demonstrate the beauty and visual aspect of it," said Grant. "We take a few extra steps to make the show entertaining to both people who know ASL and those who do not."

The ASL shows have become a big part of the class’ popularity. "They have a lot of fun putting these on. For many students who are not in drama, band or choir, this is their only chance to get on a stage and perform," Grant said. "And the students work hard to learn their songs, perform them well and earn a spot in the shows. There comes a point when we stop putting our kids’ work on the refrigerator. The ASL show gives students the opportunity to demonstrate to parents and the community what they have learned and achieved."

Grant said her goal for her students is to develop an ASL vocabulary, understand its grammar and be able to have a conversation in the language. She also teaches the students about deaf culture, norms and history.

Senior Sydney Niemi who is in her third year of ASL and is the club treasurer, has enjoyed learning about the deaf society. "I see a deaf person and understand that they are really the same as everyone else." Niemi is considering getting an ASL certificate, but feels that the knowledge she has right now can help her find work. "I know I can assist deaf customers and that could set me apart from others for a job," she said.

ASL has become a popular alternative to the standard foreign language options in high school. "The visual part of ASL really makes sense to a lot of people who may struggle with speech issues in another language," said Grant. "Some students are hands-on learners and we are definitely a hands-on class."

That was the case for senior Anthony Valdez, ASL Club president and third year student.

"I considered taking Spanish but when I saw people involved with ASL I got interested in it." He said. "It turns out I have a knack for flipping English language into ASL language. It comes easy to me." Two summers ago Valdez worked at a summer playground with hearing and non-hearing kids. His ASL training paid off and he was able to help the children get along and communicate. Valdez hopes to find work as an interpreter at BYU Idaho where he plans to attend college. "I may try to make it a career, but I am unsure yet," he added

For Grant, this class is more than just language. "We don’t have control of a lot of things in our lives, but we do have control over how we treat people. This class lends itself to those types of discussions." she explained.

"I hope the students come out of class with an understanding that everyone is different and you can’t make quick judgments about anyone. Everyone has abilities and disabilities. If you assume someone has a limitation you may miss out on knowing some pretty wonderful things about that person."

Jemtegaard, Gause, and Washougal High School kitchens score high on audit

Washougal students not only enjoy nutritious lunchroom food, but are now assured it is prepared to the highest health and safety standards. In early January Washougal High School, Jemtegaard Middle School and Gause Elementary school kitchens scored high on an audit by the National Safety Foundation (NSF). NSF is a third party company hired for independent inspections of kitchens managed by Sodexo for the Washougal School District. These three schools were randomly selected for the audit. Jemtegaard and Gause received “Double Gold” ratings, earning 100 percent in both categories of Food Safety and Health & Safety. WHS was nearly perfect with 100% on food and 99.5% on health and safety.

“These high scores represent a coming together of years of hard work and continuous improvements to the food & physical safety systems at Washougal.” said Mark Jasper, Sodexo Nutrition Services Director at Washougal School District. “I am very proud of our staff. They did a great job of getting systems in place and answering examiner questions.” Pictured are WHS kitchen staff from left to right, Nancy Sonneson, Sharon House, Laura Spangenberg, Mark Jasper, and Bo Keyser.
Washougal students pen amazing essays; Canyon Creek student wins state award

Canyon Creek Middle School seventh grader Emma Hein won second place and in Washington state for her essay in the Veterans of Foreign Wars Patriot’s Pen Essay contest. Emma received a check for $400.

“I was surprised when I was told I had won,” said Emma. “It was very special. I am putting the award money straight into my college fund.”

Award winners at the regional level are: (sixth grade): Kaytlyn Sandu, 3rd place, Canyon Creek; Ryan Kepner, honorable mention, Canyon Creek; Audry Hincliff, honorable mention, Canyon Creek; (seventh grade): Kennedy Ferguson, 1st place, Canyon Creek; Emma Hein, 2nd place, Canyon Creek; Garret Foster, 3rd place, Canyon Creek; Felicity Goetz, honorable mention, Canyon Creek; Anastasia Janiszewski, honorable mention, Canyon Creek; (eighth grade): Justin Snodgrass, first place, Jemtegaard.

The following elementary students also received awards: (third grade): Wyat Hammer, 3rd place, Gause; William Gunn, honorable mention, Gause; (fourth grade): Reid Rotundo, 1st place, Gause; Gabby Warta, 2nd place, Gause; Maddox Edwards, honorable mention, Cape Horn-Skye; Tyler Conrad, honorable mention, Cape Horn-Skye; (fifth grade): Caden Lowman, 3rd place, Gause; Rebecca Hodges, honorable mention, Gause; Emily Hearns, honorable mention, Gause.

WHS students received awards in the Voice of Democracy competition: Lance Lejewski, 2nd place; Justice Rosales, honorable mention; and Crystal Saltmarsh, honorable mention.

Hathaway students get glimpse of Kenyan life

Gause Elementary second graders were able to glimpse into a vastly different culture thanks to a visit from Maasai Warrior and Elder, Sabore Ole Oyie, from Kenya.

Students prepared for Sabore’s visit by learning about the animals, geography and customs of Kenya, as well as words in the Kiswahili language and creating mock passports.

Dressed in traditional Maasai clothing, Ole Oyia spoke to the students about life in his village and the different challenges they face. He sang students a song traditionally sung before hunting a lion and asked them to join him in the jumping dance to celebrate a successful lion hunt.

Hathaway students embrace technology as they learn and teach

No two snowflakes are exactly the same. Neither is the way Hathaway Elementary fourth and fifth graders in Erin Hayes’ class used iPad technology to teach younger students how to make paper snowflakes.

“Teaching students how to effectively communicate directions is one of the Washington State Learning Requirements,” explained Hayes. “First, our kids decided they wanted to teach Alexis McKee’s second and third grade class next door how to make three-dimensional snowflakes. Then they decided to use the classroom iPads as an instructional tool.”

Each student created their own unique presentation. Some illustrated their step descriptions with videos and others with photos. When it was all done they took the materials to make the snowflakes and their iPad and worked one-on-one with younger students to teach them the process.

“Making the snowflakes was tricky at first, but Jocelyn was a really good listener,” said fifth grader Kayla Grimani. “I think it was better for her to see my directions with the iPad because there were pictures, videos and transitions with all the steps.”

Second grader Aundre Pitts enjoyed the learning experience. “The iPads were really cool because the steps were right there and there was a touch screen. When I’m in fifth grade, I hope I get an iPad!”

The iPads in the classroom are a part of a Washougal School District pilot program to test their enhancement to learning and the feasibility of a longer term initiative to provide iPads to a larger group of students. Currently one fifth grade class in each elementary school is using them for research, to reinforce learning, engage in peer editing, and create presentations. The iPad also takes the place of the traditional paper textbook.

“It is pretty amazing what our kids can do when you set technology right in front of them,” commented Hayes.
Cape Horn-Skye among most improved in state

For the third time, Cape Horn-Skye Elementary was named one of the most improved schools in the state as it received the 2012 School of Distinction Award.

Cape Horn-Skye is among the 5% highest improving schools in the state of Washington for increased Reading and Math achievement over the past 5 years. The school also achieved the award in 2009 and 2011.

Cape staff will be recognized for this outstanding achievement at a special awards ceremony May 24 in Vancouver.

Find More News at www.washougal.k12.wa.us

Washougal School District does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, honorably discharged veteran or military status, sexual orientation including gender expression or identity, the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following employee has been designated to handle questions and complaints of alleged discrimination: Title IX/RCW 28A.640 compliance officer and Section 504/ADA coordinator, Allan Fleck, Director of Special Education.

You're invited to the Washougal School Board meeting!
Meetings are held at 6:30 p.m. in the District Board Room, 4855 Evergreen Way, unless otherwise noted.

March 12, Gause Elementary
March 26, CANCELLED
April 9, Canyon Creek Middle School
April 23

Eddy brings student perspective to the School Board

If you've attended a Washougal School Board meeting lately, you might have noticed a new face contributing to the discussion. Washougal High School senior Alexa Eddy currently serves as Student Representative to the School Board.

Typically, Alexa attends one Board meeting per month, providing updates on student activities. This is in addition to her already busy schedule, which includes serving as ASB president, business and marketing manager for the WHS yearbook, and cheer captain for the Panthers basketball team.

Alexa plans to study business and marketing in college and has applied to several universities in the Pacific Northwest.

Alexa admits she didn’t know much about how a school board works before she took on the role of Board Representative but as an outgoing and social student, she took on the role with ease.

Now, Alexa is comfortable in her role, bringing a student perspective to the Board room. “They don’t always get to hear all the fun stuff we are doing,” said Alexa.

Alexa says that her experience working with the board has helped prepare her for college and eventually her career. “It has given me an insight as to how professional meetings work and I’ve learned how to dress and how to speak in a business meeting,” said Alexa.

“It’s helped me learn how to be a leader and helped me with managing deadlines.”

Future looks bright for Jemtegaard and WHS Business Leaders

Students at Jemtegaard Middle School and Washougal High School made an impressive showing at the Future Business Leaders of America 2013 Winter Business Leadership Conference in late January. Making the achievements even more remarkable is that JMS is the only middle school chapter in the region so their wins came against high school competitors.

The JMS team is comprised of seventh graders Rhianna Brown, Ryenn Soule and Kyel Fisher, as well as eighth graders Janis Trent, Sayre Glaser, Matthew Hickey, Kayla Donahue, Tanner Byington, Rory Csanky and Maralee Dakolios.

WHS team members are: Josh Banks, Sean Guthrie, Michelle Greear, Allix Fisher, Bekah Luthi, Sean Guthrie, Adam Krout Tiffany Brock, Austin Thompson and Madisen Baldwin.