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Mardi Gras carnival supports OM teams

Fort Leavenworth Schools celebrate Mardi Gras in OM teams fundraiser.

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A Mardi Gras-themed carnival Feb. 24 at the old MacArthur Elementary School building raised funds to support the Eisenhower Elementary School and Patton Junior High School Odyssey of the Mind teams.

Odyssey of the Mind is a problem-solving competition for students in grades kindergarten through college. Students work together for months to develop creative ways to solve problems by building sets, writing scripts and acting out skits following a strict checklist and criteria. During competitions, students have eight minutes to present their solutions. There is also a spontaneous portion where teams have only a few minutes to solve a quick-thinking problem.

Emily Love, a ninth-grader at Leavenworth High School and former Patton student, attended with her sister, Hannah Love, a sixth-grader from Eisenhower Elementary School.

“The fundraiser is for a great cause,” Emily said. “And, this is also a beneficial event in that students get to socialize and meet new people in a fun learning environment. And, even though we got a ride because of the sudden cold weather, the location is actually reasonable walking distance from home.”

Amy Reinhold, sixth-grade teacher at Eisenhower, is in her third year as a coach of the Odyssey of the Mind Division II team. Reinhold said fundraisers are vital to defray the logistical costs of getting students to the world competition.

“The district and community help us by producing fundraisers throughout the year,” Reinhold said. “There are inherent costs associated with participation that go beyond the registration fees. Our district has sent OM teams to world for the last 15 years. Fundraisers help pay for T-shirts, transportation, lodging and food.”

Robyn Hilt, gifted facilitator for Unified School District 207 and Odyssey of the Mind coach for the Patton Division III team, said hundreds of teams from around the world take part in the creative problem-solving competition.

“I am relatively new to the district and thought a Mardi Gras carnival format would be an engaging way to do a fundraiser,” Hilt said. “We have Patton Junior High School students from National Junior Honor Society, Student Council and Odyssey of the Mind serving at booths and game stations. Teens are showing leadership, doing community service and modeling for the younger students by interacting with them during the production of this event.”

Ross Steele, quartermaster of James Taylor Memorial Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 12003 in Lansing, operated one of the VFW concession stands selling carnival food items to patrons.

“I’m here with our commander, Felix Sanchez and our surgeon, Ed Marquay. We’re selling cotton candy, popcorn, nachos, and hotdogs,” Steele said. “Everything costs one dollar and all of the proceeds go to the school district to support the Odyssey of the Mind fundraiser.”

Patton Junior High School Principal Ryan Wiebe said the event was a great opportunity and environment for students to raise money and interact constructively. He said teachers and students did a great job producing the Mardi Gras event as a fundraiser for Odyssey of the Mind.

“Ms. Hilt came up with a fantastic idea with the carnival format,” Wiebe said. “Our students compete at state and then it is on to the world competition. The Odyssey of the Mind program appreciates the great support received from so many sectors of the community.

The Kansas Odyssey of the Mind competition is April 8 and the world finals are May 24-27 at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Mich.

For more information visit the USD207.org website.



PHOTO/ CHRISTOPHER BURNETT, FORT LEAVENWORTH LAMP

Krissy Reed, a volunteer who is also the new Patton Junior High School secretary, applies Mardi Gras-themed face paint to Hannah Love, a sixth-grade student at Eisenhower Elementary School during the USD 207 Mardi Gras carnival fundraiser Feb. 24 at the old MacArthur Elementary School building. Photo by Christopher Burnett/Fort Leavenworth Lamp