

OMLA News



Oregon Middle Level Association May 2003

an affiliate of the National Middle School Association

From OMLA President Mike Scott:

Good-bye from Mike

I would like to thank all of the members of OMLA for giving me the opportunity to serve as the president of this organization for the past two years. During these past two years I have had the pleasure of watching the organization put on a tremendously successful middle level conference, have had the opportunity to work with a highly skilled and motivated board and have met many people throughout the state who are committed to the unique needs of middle level students.

I would specifically like to thank Pete Lorain for his guidance and wisdom as he has served as the executive secretary during my tenure as president. I first met Pete almost 15 years ago as he lead our school district through the transformation to middle schools. In my final letter as president, I would like to pass on some of the things that Pete has taught me over the years.

- Work to build positive relationships with your colleagues and with educators from across the state.
- Deliberately and purposefully set aside time to connect with your family. You can't give your best to your students if you do not have a balance in your life.
- Notice the successes of your students. Deliberately look for the good things that your students do. Offer specific praise regarding these things.
- Let your students know that you support them and care for them even when they make mistakes.
- Make each decision using the filter of "What's best for kids?"

In spite of the budget woes that our state is facing, I hope that this has been a positive year for you and your students. The work that you do to encourage the students and to praise their efforts is critical in their social, emotional and academic development. Best wishes for a relaxing and rejuvenating summer.



Hot Tips for Next Year

Want to communicate successfully with parents? Establish an email newsletter for your school or for classrooms. If you put a place on your registration forms for email addresses, or just put out a clipboard requesting them, you can create a mailing list and send email newsletters. There is no question that hard copy gets pitched in the recycle (or trash!), but that email gets read. Teachers can create their own class lists and email home assignments and notice of upcoming projects.

OMLA

"Together celebrating the uniqueness of the middle level experience through advocacy and professional support."

Join or Renew NOW!

Membership Year

OMLA's membership year corresponds with COSA, the state administrators' organization that takes care of us and handles our membership. The membership year runs from July 1 to June 30. If you would like to renew or join OMLA, the membership form is enclosed in this newsletter and now is the time to do it. Anyone can be a member.

Types of OMLA Membership

Everyone interested in middle-level education is invited to join. Here are the different kinds of membership:

- * Individuals: \$35
- * Full-Time Students: \$20
- * Institutions: \$125 per year, includes five members, all of whom receive benefits



Why Join?

Most states have middle level associations that are NMSA affiliates, and OMLA is the affiliate for Oregon. As middle level educators, you know how special it is to serve this unique population. With ever-increasing demands on schools, having association with other middle-level professionals is invaluable.

Membership benefits include:

- Newsletter
- Regional activities, conferences
- Networking
- Influence in Oregon middle level education through cooperation with COSA, TSPC, ODE, Middle Level Consortium, Collegiate Middle Level Association, and Northwest Affiliates Partnership
- Influence in National Middle School Association through Western Region Trustee
- Reduced conference fees and discount book prices

Renew or Join NOW!

NMSA/OMLA Joint Membership

Consider becoming a joint member of OMLA and NMSA. They have more than 30,000 members from all over the country and world and you can be a part of this group, advocating for appropriate and dynamic education for young adolescents. There are two applications in this newsletter, and we hope you will use one to join your institution and the other to join NMSA and OMLA as an individual. NMSA has institutional memberships also.



The cost of joint membership in OMLA & NMSA is \$89 per year.

"NMSA is dedicated to improving the educational experiences of young adolescents by providing vision, knowledge, and resources to all who serve them in order to develop healthy, productive, and ethical citizens."

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Oregon's Inaugural Collegiate Middle Level Association Chapter

by Micki M. Caskey, Portland State University

Oregon's first Collegiate Middle Level Association (CMLA), an affiliate member of the National Middle School Association, has commenced. CMLA is a professional education organization for college students who are preparing to become middle level teachers. After a year of exploration, Oregon Middle Level Consortium of teacher educators decided to pursue a statewide CMLA chapter. The Consortium supported the establishment of the first CMLA chapter at a single higher education institution when policies did not permit regional networks.

In Fall 2002, Portland State University launched a chapter of CMLA. A cadre of graduate students

was recruited from the middle level cohort and a core group was elected to leadership positions in this CMLA chapter.

In addition to chapter meetings, CMLA members attended a session at NMSA's national conference that brought together CMLA chapters from across the county. CMLA members took advantage of this unique opportunity to network. During this interaction, our members discovered that the Oregon chapter was the only graduate level chapter.

During winter and spring, members focused on two topics: the CMLA Spring Retreat and recruiting members. The CMLA Spring Retreat was April 5- 6, 2003 and chapter

representatives were required to attend. Luckily, the Oregon Middle Level Association was able to support our representatives' travel to Westerville, Ohio. Thanks, OMLA! The two-day event was packed with information, networking, and camaraderie. Our members came away with lots of ideas for fundraising and expanding our chapter. Next, members conducted their first recruitment event at PSU on April 10, 2003. Though attendance was limited, we attracted some potential members.

To continue the PSU CMLA chapter, our officers have offered to continue their service and will seek new leaders from the incoming middle level cohort.

Beach Bash Activity Night

by Glen Martz, OESPA Representative

The annual Cascade Middle School Beach Bash Activity Night was held on Friday, April 11th from 7-9:00 pm. We use all areas of the building for the evening's activities. In our courtyard we have a water balloon toss and egg toss competition, a bean bag throw with a cutout of the principal, and we cook marshmallows over a BBQ to make smores. In the large gym we have a beach ball volleyball tournament, a hula hoop contest, a grass skirt contest, and a limbo competition. In the small gym we have a 3-on-3 basketball tournament and a free throw contest. In our library, we have card games with dealers. All winners in these competitions get student store coupons, or other items which have been donated from local vendors (free food items from fast food restaurants). Finally, on our

cafeteria stage, we have a Karaoke machine with microphones, and the Mr. Wolverine (Willamette HS) candidates who are raising money for the Children's Miracle Network at Sacred Heart Hospital usually entertain us with a few songs. A large majority of our staff signs up to help supervise the events (including our educational assistants and secretaries), and a number of parents also help. We take pictures for \$1.00 each, and have a backdrop of a beach scene with various props to use. All tickets are pre-sold for \$5.00 each, and we limit the sales to the first 200 out of student population of 480. During the evening we serve a blended drink similar to an Orange Julius, and ice cream sundaes during the last 45 minutes. Weather permitting, the smores are a big hit.

Prior to the start of the Beach Bash this year, we held a community



BBQ in front of the school from 5-7:00 pm. The Booster Club from Willamette HS provided their BBQ trailer, and we had all of the food and drink items donated from Winco. The Winco Corporation donated 325 hamburgers, 325 hot dogs, 650 packages of chips, a combination of soft drinks in cans and bottled water, 650 ice cream treats, and all of the condiments for the hamburgers and hot dogs. We charged \$3.00 per meal, and \$1.00 for two ice cream treats. We didn't sell out, but it was a good fundraiser for our Cascade Parent Organization. Families came to the BBQ, and then students who had tickets for the Beach Bash stayed until 9:00. This entire event was a great way to bring the community together, and really involved a number of different groups of people. A fun time for all!

Curiously Watching Gathering Smoke from our Edifices of Education

by Charlie Wilshire, Region 5 Director

Lately, as we have been reading articles and watching news stories about the cuts that will, and have been, affecting the schools, it appears that though the news is devastating, the general public is not responding to this emergency as if indeed it were an emergency. It is as if we are standing next to a burning building and are commenting that it is getting warm and smoky and that if we don't do anything the people inside could get hurt and the building may collapse. There are nods of approval and we continue to prognosticate about what will happen while roof begins to cave in and the inferno engulfs the entire structure. After what is left of this building remains a smoldering pile of embers, we continue to discuss what is the best possible way to assess what has happened and whose fault it is that it occurred in the first place. Meanwhile, there is no shelter and we are left alone without a place to keep us safe and a home to keep us together.

We, the constituents, have been dulled to the point of being inured to the consequences of waiting for a miracle or, more unlikely, an agreement of the Legislature that will provide adequately funded public education for Oregon. Getting used to the fact, getting tired of hearing the bad news, not wanting to talk about what is happening and throwing up our hands in acquiescence is irresponsible. It is irresponsible to compromise the hopes, dreams and future of our kids to the extent that we are culpable, because if it is for no other reason to do the right thing, we should display the honor and respect deserving of the education that was given to us by allowing today's students to at least have the opportunities we had when we were kids. Yet how might we be able to effectively communicate the plight of the schools that will trigger

groundswells of empathic understanding and waves of support?

An experiment was done at a school at the southern end of the Willamette Valley where parents, local townspeople and media were invited to witness how a class would hypothetically be conducted if the school budget were to be cut to the point many are expecting. What resulted was a display of organized chaos, where very little learning was done in the wake of a sublimely overstuffed class whose teacher could do little else than to try to bring a semblance of calm to what easily could have been a completely uncontrollable and dangerous crowd. Eyes were opened. The reporting of this possible glimpse into the future and what is prophesied a sad eventuality, gave those who read or watched the news an unsavory vicarious experience of what will be endured by next year's students who very well may live out this enactment every day next year.

This school's experiment should be the beginning of more statewide creative attempts to gain sincere public appreciation of not only the problem, the pointed redressing of it and the needed overwhelming demand to employ a real and dependable revenue source for funding, but should also be used as a springboard to create and foster greater community solidarity with the schools, their administrators, teachers and students. By devising strategies to include the community to be a part of the school and creating bridges with local businesses, other schools, and agencies our celebration of learning at the schools can be shared with those who could do to find reasons to celebrate in this trying time. The synergistic effect of creating a working relationship with the communities could possibly mean for the students:

- More real world examples of how their attention to education is applicable to the promise of their future
- Greater numbers of school volunteers
- Internship programs that could incorporate students' learning with skills which are sought after by employers (i.e. hospitals, government, lawyers, publishers, schools, research facilities, hi tech etc.)
- Easier and clearer means by which the public can identify with strengths and weaknesses of the schools
- Possible alternative sources of school funding
- For the public, they not only will get a chance to see first hand the current potential of tomorrow's citizens, but will realize better opportunities to contribute to the building of their own communities' successes.

If the people who are standing outside of the burning building are related to the people who are inside of the building and who likewise understand that their own survival is predicated on the safety, well being and education of everyone, more likely than not, there would be less time standing around waiting for the fire to put itself out and more time spent reacting efficiently to not only dousing the fire but to collectively rolling up our sleeves to build a better and safer building. Schools and communities need to create stronger ties with one another to enable positive change to occur. Let us look for ways to communicate more effectively that there is a crystal clear empathic understanding of what our future holds. If then we should smell smoke, and those we have hired to react are not yet around, we will take to task what needs to be done before flames see to it to prove us wrong. Who is willing to roll up their sleeves?

Thanks for a Great Year

by Beth Madison, President-Elect and Newsletter Editor

This year was busy for OMLA despite having not offered the annual conference at Salishan. We were fortunate to host the NMSA national conference in Portland, an activity that required a huge amount of effort from the Steering Committee, co-chaired by former board member Jan Burgess and outgoing president Mike Scott. Despite the budget woes both here and across the nation, the attendance was close to 9000. With over 3400 Oregonians in attendance, OMLA received a check from NMSA for \$15,400. We will invest these funds in a CD with the intention of staying solvent as an organization without spending it.

Other activities that the Board and its members did this year:

- Published and sent this newsletter to every middle level school in the state four times
- Revised our constitution
- Began the overhaul of our website
- Gave awards to four adults and increased our awards to include students and adults all over the state
- Defined our purpose and activities
- Supported the new Collegiate Middle Level Association as it forms
- Provided input to TSPC and ODE
- Backed Oregon school administrators running for NMSA offices
- Sent board members to the NMSA Affiliates' Summit
- Publicized and participated in Month of the Young Adolescent
- Networked with colleagues from Oregon and around the nation

We say good-bye to some awesome individuals this June when the OMLA Board of Directors ends it

year and begins anew in July. Our president, Mike Scott, leaves us after serving this role and president-elect, not to mention Steering Committee co-chair for the NMSA convention. He has been a wonderful person to work with and helped the organization tremendously. We will miss Mo Musser who has served on the Board for the past four years as the higher education representative. She has been very active with TSPC and licensure. Pete Lorain has served as executive secretary for two years, and while he has stepped down from this role, I am optimistic he will continue to join us as a member-at-large. Region directors Frank Scotto and Doug Hislop have finished their terms as have OESPA and OASSA representatives Glen Martz and Sue Robertson. We are pleased that Glen is willing to stay on as president-elect. Our secretary, Kristi Woika, has also agreed to run again.

I will step into the role of president in July and continue as newsletter editor. It promises to be a great year. I am pleased to follow in Mike Scott's footsteps continuing to help OMLA be a strong affiliate doing activities to promote good things for our kids.

Thank you to all of you who were members this past year, whether individual or school, OMLA or NMSA or both. Thanks also to all of the people who helped us as an organization in formal and informal ways. These folks include member-at-large Dave Putnam who has been with the organization since its inception, the COSA staff, and Lee Wick at Valic who sponsors our social events. We are very lucky.

Money, Honey!


So what do you do to raise money so your school has enough to do fun things for the kids? Here are some ideas from educators:

- Ask for Things: Some folks I talked to put an article in their local newspaper in August asking for donations of school supplies. They were astounded at how much they got.
- Ask for Money: Some people really prefer to open up their wallets and get out the checkbook rather than buying stuff or attending events.
- Silent Auction: It's not unusual for businesses to be more than willing to donate gift certificates or merchandise for silent auctioning. Having an event to go along with it adds fun and builds climate.
- Magazine Sale: The magazine sale is probably the most popular means of mass fundraising in middle schools. Students sell subscriptions and renewals and get prizes in return. This is a fast way to make a lot of money, but it is time consuming and can be a bit nerve-wracking.
- Cookie Dough Sale: Like the magazine sale, cookie dough is easy, fast and profitable. It works much the same way as the magazine sale, and is a big hit because the product is yummy.
- Selling Stuff: The stuff out there to sell is endless. Just look in the junk mail that comes to your school.
- In-Kind Donations: Holding a musical instrument drive can get some great donations. Companies like HP have computer donation programs. If you put the word out, folks will donate all kinds of things.
- Grants: Little grants or big grants, they all add up. While they may take time to write, grants can get a lot of money. Get on the Internet and do a search. It's endless.



I Love Middle School

by Elizabeth Tidd and Maritza Martinez, 8th Grade Students, North Albany Middle School



Middle School is a time of change and growth. As students, we change and develop, and soon we sort of belong to the school. We have grown accustomed to such a place where we learn life's little lessons. But through all that, there are the little and big things that we have come to accept and love. What I mean to say is that we love middle school for what it's worth. It is not just a school or a period of time. Don't you remember that you once went to middle school? Did you not have anything that you liked or loved about middle school? We have things or memories about what we love, which remind us why we love middle school.

As I look back into my three years here I remember what it was like. I was terrified and really shy, but when we had a day to get used to its surroundings I was okay. If it wasn't for that one day, I would have been very afraid of middle school.

Kids here are pretty nice. There are the usual groups and cliques around, and as always, we get put into one. Filed and recorded. Then, there are times when the groups don't exist and there are only friends and allies.

Yet there is the exception of those who do not belong to groups, nor do they wish to be in one. The group is not them and the group cannot hold them. They travel from group to group staying for a while, then heading out to another group, making friends and taking friends. They are the bridge between the gaps that separates the groups. To them people are just people, not status or popularity, neither poor nor rich; they are what they are to them.

Once, we were little children yet still now we are not really adults. Even

with this little fact we are still respected and we like to be treated equally with the adults. Both respected, and expected to succeed and exceed in succeeding. If they give us the tools and nourishment to sow the seeds of knowledge, our minds can produce the sweetest fruits. We grow as peers, yet triumph as individuals. Learning from each other, that which cannot be taught in textbooks. The teachers treat us as equals, and in return, they gain friends and knowledge. Knowledge of the hottest trends, the latest slang, or even just how the youth of America perceives the world. Such knowledge keeps our society running in the utmost order.

One of the great things about middle school is the fact that you learn to accept others and yourself with a smile. Accidents happen, and why not laugh at yourself? It allows others to laugh with you, and makes you seem more fun. For example, one time, I decided I'd stick a jelly bean up my nose at the lunch table out of pure stupidity. My friend was sitting across from me, and looked up at me after just taking a big drink of her chocolate milk. She saw the jelly bean in my nose, and laughed so hard the milk came spraying out of her nose. The chocolate milk landed all over my brand new sweatshirt. I walked around school with a chocolate stain all over it. We still joke about it every time I eat jelly beans, or gummy bears, or whatever can fit up my nose.

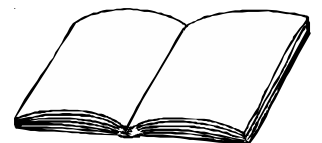
That is another reason that makes middle school so much fun: Fun! With all the dances and clubs, who doesn't mind a little more homework? Not to mention that the teachers bring a smile to your face. They are always goofing off and acting stupid. You can't help

but love them. Even the meanest teachers have a wacky inside. All you have to do search it out. This makes the school seem much more inviting and most importantly, fun.

But middle school isn't only about the lessons or the teachers; it's also about the people we spend it with, our friends. We all need friends. No one can deny it. A need for emotional attachment is mandatory. Everyone needs to be liked. In middle school, you have so many friends, it's not even funny. In fact, I have so many friends, I have friends in just about every "group". And believe me, it helps to have a variety of different types of friends. That way, you always have a friend around to lean on.

Friends can also help with the enjoyment of middle school. I can remember one time my friends and I went around school with a caterpillar that we named Billy Bob. We told a lot of people that he was magical and he would make you disappear. Some people actually believed us. We fed him grass, and gave him water to drink, because "He said he was hungry". Then, when we had to set him free, someone accidentally stepped on him. My friends and I cried. Billy Bob died! It was so tragic!

I will never forget my three years in middle school. They were some of the best years in my life so far. These memories can never be replaced or forgotten. They are priceless and dear to me. No matter how old I get, I will **never** forget those three years of blissful memories.



OMLA Outstanding Student and Outstanding Service Awards

by Beth Madison President-Elect and Newsletter Editor

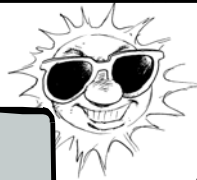
At the NMSA Summit in Las Vegas last summer, I heard a speaker from the New England affiliate where giving awards is a major function. For them, it is easy to conduct ceremonies and expect good attendance because of the geographical nature of those states. But for us, having the tenth largest area of any state in the US makes it much harder to get people together.

Recognition of deserving middle level individuals is one of the functions of OMLA. After pondering how we could do this, we decided that to furnish the award blanks and the concept, and schools could take it from there. We ordered enough custom blanks to send three Outstanding Student Awards and one Outstanding Service Award to each of the 575 middle level schools in the state. If everyone participates, we will give out 2300 awards!

Thanks to the awesome support for printing

and mailing from the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators, and the volunteer labor of many middle school kids, this project was completed last week and the fun has begun. I invited people to email me for the templates so they could simply run the award blanks through their computer printers. I have an inkling that a lot of Oregonians are going to get a nice surprise at their end-of-the-year ceremonies.

If you have not gotten your mailing and would like to participate, or you need more awards blanks or the templates, email me at beth_madison@albany.k12.or.us. As usually happens, I have extras. I would love to send them to you and OMLA would love to have you award some great kids and adults. We are writing a sample press release for those of you who like to put your awards in the newspaper and you can email me for that also.

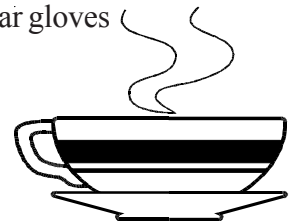


Parent Drive-Thru Coffee & Bus Driver Recognition

by Beth Madison, President-Elect & Your Editor

Want to make a lot of friends? Serve them good, hot coffee first thing in the morning! On Valentine's Day and the last Friday of the year, our local gourmet coffee company donates enough good ground coffee, cups and lids for us to brew coffee for all 100 drivers of the cars that drop our kids off at school in the morning. We administrators dress up in matching aprons with our school logo and students hand out the cups with cream or without, pockets loaded with sugar packets for those who like it sweet. The kids also board the busses with coffee and treats after they unload, and kids with signs of appreciate stand and wave. We put the hot cups in the cardboard "to go" four packs that you get when you buy too many cups to carry. We also have the kids wear gloves to protect their hands.

Not only do we have happy parents and bus drivers, but we have made a school-business partner of our local coffee kiosk!



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www.omla.net



JOIN NOW!
Membership Year
July 1-June 31

Ballot for Election of Officers to the Board of Directors
Oregon Middle Level Association

Please vote for one person to fill each of the following positions:

President-Elect: (two-year term)

___ Glen Martz, Principal, Cascade Middle School

Secretary: (two-year term)

___ Kristi Woika, Assistant Principal, Neah-Kan-Nie Jr/Sr High

Region 2 Director: Baker, Grant, Malheur, Morrow, Umatilla, Union and Wallowa Counties (three-year term)

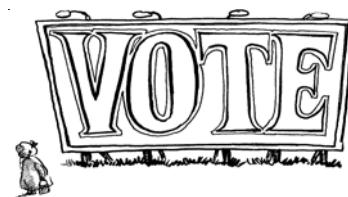
___ Ron Anthony, Principal, Columbia Middle School

Region 7 Director: Multnomah County (three-year term)

___ Terri Bothwell, Assistant Principal, Gordon Russell Middle School

Please send this ballot by **June 15, 2003** to:

OMLA, 707 13th Street SE, Salem, OR 97301-4035, by **June 15, 2003**



Thank you!

clip 'n' send