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**Klamath Falls City Schools**

**District Newsletter**

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**Community or District Concern**

**By Paul Hillyer, KFCS' Superintendent**

One of Klamath Falls City School's five goals is to increase the high school graduation rate. All district schools, including the elementary schools, implemented plans to address this objective. For example, Mills School invited former students who were high school seniors on track to graduate to be recognized for their accomplishment before the Mills' student body. They also had these seniors talk to the younger students and encouraged them to develop the knowledge and study skills in elementary school that will enable them to graduate.

Many other examples could be given about the creativity shown by the schools in helping students strive to accomplish a high school diploma. This work is particularly crucial when one considers that about 39% of youth in our county do not graduate in four years. Obviously, improving the graduation rate is critical for district success, but what about the community's success? Is this just a school issue?

Helping all students earn a diploma is a community-wide concern. The graduation rate of a community impacts community safety, creates improved quality of life for citizens, brings about a stronger economy and helps establish a more positive future for the region. Communities that have high graduation rates tend to be attractive places for businesses and new families. Much could be learned in this area from Clarksville County in Tennessee (see attached link). They have created a community-wide focus around the slogan, "100% Graduation is Clarksville's Business." Organizations such as businesses, churches, and service clubs across the county have joined hands with the school district in promoting graduation among their youth. David Smith, one of Clarksville's business partners, put it well: "When you look at it from a purely economic standpoint, it's probably one of the best investments in the country we can make. If you take these students and we help them become productive citizens, they graduate and they have the life skills to earn a living. We turn them into taxpayers and consumers. We turn them into productive citizens who are not only out there making money and spending money, they also have a desire to help their community and see it grow."

At last count, 110 partners have joined the graduation effort in Clarksville, and the improvements have been dramatic. The county graduation rate has gone from 76% in 2008 to 93% last year. Think of what that means to community improvement and its attractiveness to new businesses, industries, and families!

Is it time for Klamath Falls to consider such an effort? Do people here have a stake in improving the 61% graduation rate? If you are interested in helping grow a local effort to improve our graduation rate, respond to this email. We would love to hear from you and start organizing a community campaign to bring about a 100% graduation rate in Klamath Falls. For more information on Clarksville's efforts, please click this link:

<http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Success-stories/Success-Stories-By-State/Tennessee/TN-Working-toward-100-percent.html>

#### **Other News:**

1. KFCS has submitted its first Achievement Compact to the state. This compact requires all Oregon school districts to set improvement targets for nine different groups of students in nine different categories. One such category is graduation within four years and some of the subcategories of students include special education, Hispanic, African-American, and Native Americans. Since we had very little data from past years to draw from in setting these targets, the district was conservative in their goals. After a year of data has been collected, more realistic objectives can be set. The goal of this new state requirement is to have 100% high school graduation, 40% of graduates going to four-year colleges, and 40% going to two-year institutions by 2025. The state plans on using this new system to replace the No Child Left Behind framework from which they are seeking a federal waiver.
2. Do you have an interest that you would like to promote with KU students such as chess, dance, crafts, or other hobbies? If so, please let us know. We would like to start after-school clubs at KU to help students explore their talents and avocations. This would help young people develop positive outlets for their time while gaining a greater affiliation with their school. Please let us know if you would like to help in this area.
3. The Credit for Proficiency Program's first year was a great success. About 35 students attained internships and work experiences with a number of local businesses and organizations. This effort is unique in Oregon and is the result of a partnership between KFCS, Junior Achievement, and local employers. If you are interested in learning more about this effort, let us know. Scott Mason, program coordinator, plans to expand this initiative next year.
4. The final numbers on open enrollment turned out neutral for district enrollment. There virtually was no difference between the number of students who chose to leave KFCS with those who chose to attend our district schools.
5. KU won conference championships in the following in 2011-12: football, boys' soccer, girls' cross-country, skiing, DECA, orchestra, choir, band, and baseball. These are the most conference championships won by KU in a school year in the 84-year history of the school.