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Taylor County Moving for a Cure  
page 10



BRIAN WILSON/THE STAR NEWS

A crowd of 300 came to the Medford Curling Club on May 18 for the Dancing with the Medford Stars event hosted by Feet-N-Motion Dance Studio. Above, Payton Neitzel with Father Patrick McConnell and (right) Citori Gebert with Pat Sullivan were among the crowd favorites. See page 11 for more pictures from the event.



# Here we go again

County veterans benefit specialist quits, claims harassment, bullying

BY BRIAN WILSON  
NEWS EDITOR

There is additional staff upheaval in the Taylor County Veterans Service office as Veterans Benefits Specialist Nikki Sherman publicly announced her resignation as of May 22.

The announcement came in the form of an email that was sent on Sunday night to community members, Veterans Service office staff from surrounding counties, and local media.

Sherman referenced past actions of county leadership to dealings with the office which led up to the resignation last summer of former county veterans service officer Shellie Shaw, and was cited by previous veterans service officer Dan Judnic in his surprise resignation earlier this year after serving only a few months in the position. The email also includes information about

See VETERANS on page 4

# Parents call for answers from school board

Dwayne Parkinson wants answers about bullying policy enforcement

BY BRIAN WILSON  
NEWS EDITOR

Dwayne Parkinson wants answers. In an approximately 20-minute-long presentation during the public comment portion of Monday night's Medford School Board meeting, Parkinson called for board action on a dozen open records requests dealing with board policies and the authority of the administration in regard to parents wanting to meet with their children's teachers.

Parkinson's issues with the district go back more than a year and he said he felt he was being treated differently because he has been critical of the district's actions in the past.

According to Parkinson, two children punched and threw down his elementary school child last year. He said that from his child's perspective the students involved only had to stay inside for one recess day.

Earlier this school year, Parkinson's son missed a math question and was held in for recess to work on it with the teacher.

Parkinson questioned how missing part of an assignment had the equal level of punishment with what the students received for punching and kick-

ing his child. Parkinson said he emailed the teacher asking about it, and noting "there appears to be a gap between the teaching and learning style." He said his son has been struggling all year in the class and stated that his son says he hates school and is calling himself "dumb."

Parkinson continued that when his son received the report card he said it was not good and that he disagreed with the teacher's conclusions. He said he wrote another email stating there is a problem with how the students are being taught.

In response, Parkinson said he received an email saying that the teacher did not feel safe meeting him one on

See PARENTS on page 8

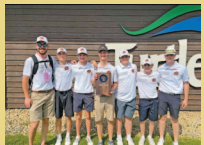


Staffing turmoil continued this week with the resignation of Veterans Benefits Specialist Nikki Sherman. She is the third person to resign in the two-person office in the past 10 months.

PAGE 12: Premier Beef show brings strong competition



SPORTS: Medford golf team are regional champions



INDEX

OPINION 6A  
 PUBLIC NOTICES 13A  
 OBITUARIES 17A

SPORTS 1B  
 TIME MACHINE 15B  
 CLASSIFIEDS 17B



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# ★ Parents call for answers over bullying by students and by staff members

Continued from page 1

one, making reference to a recent school shooting incident that occurred in Knoxville, Tenn. He said the teacher responded and him he would need to talk with principal Dan Miller.

Parkinson continued, describing the email exchanges with Miller. He said he created an agenda with five items to discuss with Miller wanting the teacher present and to go line by line through the emails exchanged to have the teacher identify which things he wrote made her feel unsafe.

In response he said, the district administration became involved, with Miller and district administrator Pat Sullivan responding that they would meet with Parkinson at the district office without the teacher present to address his concerns.

Parkinson expressed concern with the meeting taking place at the district office and objected to having the reference to the “nutjob” who shot up the Knoxville school used in the emails. He said he did not trust the school district and said he wanted chief deputy Cory Dassow to be at the meeting also.

Dassow is also a school board member. Parkinson said administration responded saying that it was not appropriate for Dassow to be there unless the school board told him to be there, but they would have school liaison officer Nick Berger.

Parkinson objected to this, because he said Berger is employed in part by the school district and has arresting authority. He also said there would be no point in meeting without the teacher present. He said he felt the situation was being unnecessarily escalated.

“My safety matters too,” Parkinson said, raising objections to Sullivan sending emails or phoning his wife without including him in the conversation.

“I am being set up to be falsely accused,” Parkinson said.

Parkinson described the school administration’s actions as being a “pathetic disingenuous charade” suggesting it is retaliation about him being a vocal critic of the school district lacking in dealing with bullying.

He said his son has gotten punched in the ribs, and come home with a shiner and has been kicked in the head by other students. “It is not hyperbole, it is a cancer,” Parkinson said, noting he has



BRIAN WILSON/THE STAR NEWS

Dwayne Parkinson, the parent of an elementary school student at Medford Schools detailed his objections to ongoing bullying behavior in the schools as well as his treatment by staff and administration when wanting to speak with his child’s teacher.

volunteered to help the school solve the issue and that the methods being used “just don’t work.”

Parkinson punctuated his presentation with individual typed records requests and said there was “Clear evidence of systemic failure.”

At one point in the presentation, board member Brian Hallgren raised concern about the length of time being given to Parkinson to talk. While typically being loose in enforcement, board president Dave Fleegel asks the comments to be kept to under five minutes. Fleegel said the period of public comment is something offered to district residents and said he would allow him to say his piece.

Items raised during public comment are not considered action items by the board for that meeting. The bullying policy and report on bullying incidents for the past year under the revamped policy approved last June was already scheduled to be on the June 26 school board meeting and will be discussed at that time.

After the meeting, Sullivan said the district would review the requests as they do all open records requests and

provide Parkinson with a response to the requests about the information he requested.

In addition to Parkinson, parent Jason Lynch spoke about the bullying he says his daughter is receiving from both classmates and staff.

“I am scared to death for my daughter,” he said. He said that if it wasn’t for counseling she is receiving he did not think his daughter would still be here.

He said there have been remarks from staff about his daughter leaving school frequently and he said that while they may not know the impact those comments have, he said it impacts her greatly.

## STEAM program for girls offered at UWSP at Marshfield this summer

Area middle school-aged girls will build confidence in science and math at a free summer program held at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point at Marshfield.

Full STEAM Ahead will be held from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday, August 14-17, at UWSP at Marshfield. Focusing on science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics, the camp will offer guest speakers, activities and projects in topics such as team building and 3D printing.

“This was a tremendous experience for my daughter,” said one parent, Rochelle Drexler. “She talked non-stop about the program, the fun she had, the friends she made and the lessons she learned. This is a fantastic opportunity for our young

He said he knows the policies and there is no tolerance for bullying. He said he knows there are people who are trying within the district, but there are others where it feels like “it is going in one ear and out the other.”

He said they had considered going to a different school to escape the bullying here. He said he told her there would be people at other schools too, but his daughter told him she wouldn’t have to deal with bullies here anymore.

Later in the meeting, student services director Joseph Greget gave a presentation and showed a video that is being shared statewide about the CARES (Counseling for All to Reach Emotional Success) Model and the efforts in the district to improve social and emotional learning and the partnership to bring therapy resources to students.

Greget said that as of April 25, there were 138 students receiving school based mental health counseling with an additional 154 students receiving ongoing support.

The district, will be hosting a CARES Conference on June 22 from 2 to 8 p.m. at Medford Area Elementary School.

From 2 to 5 p.m. there will be sections on Suicide Prevention, Social Emotional Learning, Mental Health, Community Resources 101, Parenting Love and Logic Way, ADHD, Wellness, and more. A dinner will be held from 5 to 6 p.m. with Charlie Appelstein, a nationally recognized speaker and author of “No Such Thing as a Bad Kid.”

The conference is being offered to educators, health care professionals, human services workers, parents and community members.

According to Greget, there is an opportunity for professionals attending to earn continuing education credits. To register go to: [https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30e0848adab29a4f58-cares#/.](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30e0848adab29a4f58-cares#/)

ladies, and I feel very fortunate that my daughter was able to participate.”

Full STEAM Ahead is coordinated by the UW-Stevens Point School of Education. University students in education programs will lead each session using content designed by university faculty in STEM fields.

“Our STEAM program offers an opportunity to dive into science and mathematics while collaborating with your peers in a safe and inclusive environment,” said Jesse Mossholder, co-coordinator .

This program is free of charge and includes breakfast and lunch, sponsored by the Marshfield Area United Way. To register for Full STEAM Ahead, visit [bit.ly/uwspfullsteamahead](http://bit.ly/uwspfullsteamahead).



SUBMITTED

Girls attending the Full STEAM Ahead summer program at UWSP at Marshfield, August 14-17, will build confidence through hands-on activities in science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics.

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