

Elkton students building bridges

Modified: Friday, Mar 28th, 2008

BY: JOE HANSEN

What's in a bridge?

In the case of Elkton's Highway 38 bridge coming into town, it's shaping up to be an eloquent statement about the city's unique history, nature and community.

In an unprecedented project, local students, with the input of other members of the community, designed aesthetic components of the pylons for the structure, which is being rebuilt by Oregon Department of Transportation contractors.

At a high-energy assembly held at Elkton High School March 19, Larry Gescher of Slayden Construction presented a \$500 scholarship to EHS student Richard Sanchez for his high level of involvement in the project.



Richard Sanchez with his \$500 prize for participating in the design of Elkton's bridge.

Sanchez said he wants to use the money to study art after high school.

"I want to go to college. This will really help with that," he said.

Likewise, Anthony Calgano of TY Lin, ODOT's other contractor for the project, handed EHS art teacher Debbie Williams a \$500 check in thanks for the school art program's involvement.

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-four other students Thaddeus Miller, Mackenzie Smith, Jackson Murphy and Delena Carrington were also recognized for their artistic input in the pylons.

The school also built a time capsule, with items placed in it from every grade in the Elkton School District. The time capsule will be built into the bridge.

The assembly capped a project that began in April of 2007, when members of the bridge replacement team approached the Elkton community and asked for input regarding the look and feel of the bridge that's such a central feature of the town.

"What we love about this project is that it really involved the whole community," said Lois Cohen of Zetlin Strategic Communications, representing ODOT, at last week's assembly.

The pylons themselves were designed to represent the special nature of Elkton. A Monarch butterfly symbolizes the butterfly pavilion in Elkton, and an Osprey, Elk and Salmon show the unique wildlife of the area. Grapevines wrapped around the pylon itself represent the five wineries that have set up shop in the region. The top of the pylon will be built to look like a beaver chewed it off.

"In the beginning, we just thought, "What kinds of symbols are important to Elkton?" said art teacher Williams. "Eventually, it became much more specific . The end design was a compilation of everyone's ideas."

The time capsule, to be placed in the southwest corner of the bridge, contains an eclectic mix of items from each grade level in the school district .

The kindergarten class placed a poem and a book about, well, kindergarteners, in the box.

Likewise, the second grade class added their own book, "All About Us," for which each student had contributed a page.

The fifth grade put in a CD, because, as Deserae Maxwell put it, "Almost all of us like to listen to music."

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Eighth grader Aubrey Leno added a can of silly string.

"Our class is completely crazy," she said.

The EHS freshmen had a similar idea, putting in a Monster energy drink can to symbolize the fact that the class is comprised of "monsters."

Last week, it was clear that the Elkton community was proud of the outcome of the project, as were ODOT representatives, who said that this was probably the first endeavor of this type to take place.

"We are thrilled to death," said Elkton Mayor Rebecca Swearingen. "This is going to do nothing but enhance the beauty of a city we already think is beautiful."

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