

Crossing the line for kids, or at least waiting in one

By GENITA KOVACEVICH-COSTELLO

I've gone back into hiding now, but for more than 24 hours I was one of those over-the-top parents who crosses the line of sanity to do what she thinks is best for her kid.

On Friday morning, Sept. 14, I lined up with 33 other Lake Oswego moms and dads to secure my child one of the 85 spots in the Lake Oswego School District's Scholars Alliance program.

Parents have stood in line for much less: a Cabbage Patch doll, the latest PlayStation system.

But Scholars Alliance is touted as an educational enrichment program designed to help our high school kids think outside the box and better prepare them for college. For about \$400 a year, students and their parents meet one Saturday a month with the likes of Lake Oswego Superintendent Bill Korach as their instructors. The program is custom-made for Lake Oswego parents who rarely pass up an opportunity to give their kids a competitive edge.

A lottery filled the first 35 slots. The rest of us were faced with either vying for the next 34 slots — 17 for each high school — on a first-come, first-served basis or taking our chances in a second lottery for the final 16 spots. Since I can't remember the last time I won anything, I decided that queuing up afforded my daughter her best shot at getting in.

But just how far was I will-

ing to go? Sitting at a soccer game on Thursday night, 36 hours before signups began at 9 a.m. Saturday, I received a call from a friend already holding the No. 8 spot in the Lakeridge line. While I was prepared to spend one night pursuing this coveted admission, I balked at the thought of two nights.

So after a fitful sleep, a friend and I ventured to the district offices at 5:30 a.m. Friday. Our headlights revealed 10 Lakeridge parents camping out, assigning us spots 11 and 12. We unpacked our chairs, put on our coats and found ourselves among like-minded folks who understood what compels parents to forsake sleep, work and the comforts of home for their kids.

Robert Magill had garnered first place in line with his 7:30 a.m. arrival on Thursday, making him 49½ hours early. It was all in a parent's line of duty, as far as he was concerned. He served up fresh coffee brewed on a camp stove.

Katherine Jansen-Byrkit took her chances by arriving shortly after me for place No. 13. Despite staying in bed, she hadn't had a good sleep. As her husband said, "That line was in my head all night long."

Then there were the stand-ins — brothers who hadn't yet left for college who were willing to hold their siblings' places.

One mom looked perfectly comfortable in her Barcalounger; another had her husband deliver a back mas-

sager. Starbucks beverages arrived; lamb burgers were grilled. If I hadn't known better, I'd have thought I was at a tailgater.

At 9 a.m., we were free to leave once district personnel had checked our names. Despite the long shift, parents

and kids were smiling.

"It was fun," one parent commented.

"Fun" was stretching it for me, but "interesting" was not. For 27½ hours, I found myself part of a unique group that has now gone back into hiding.

But come our first Scholars Alliance meeting, I'll be sure to recognize the other non-card-carrying members of a subculture of parents willing to be called crazy in the name of loving our kids.

Genita Kovacevich-Costello is a writer based in Lake Oswego.

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