



YOUR EVERGREEN SCHOOLS

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Evergreen Public Schools

Excellence in education

Evergreen High School sign language interpreter wins Golden Apple Award

Debbie Renner, sign language interpreter at Evergreen High School was recently honored in Seattle with a 2008 Golden Apple Award for educational excellence. She was selected from more than 200 nominees as one of only seven individuals and three programs in the state of Washington to receive the award. Nominations ranged from pre-K - grade 12.

The Golden Apple Award was developed to honor the type of forward thinking student development that Renner epitomizes. Sponsored by Seattle television station KCTS 9, PEMCO Insurance and the School Employees Credit Union of Washington, the award "Honors committed professionals who are developing lifelong learners," said Bill Mohler,

KCTS President and CEO. "The teachers and programs being honored are those who are setting the course of our state's future by the efforts they put forth today."

At first glance, Renner seems unassuming. She moves through the room quietly, focused on students, not catching your eye until the quick, graceful movements of her hands begin translating sounds to words for the deaf and hard of hearing students in the class. She serves not only as a translator, but also a staff assistant to Kathleen Larson, teacher of the deaf at Evergreen. They work in tandem, doing their best to serve students who may not only be hearing impaired, but who also suffer from learning disabilities and other physical challenges.

Renner excels at taking what



Teacher's Golden Apple - Debbie Renner, Evergreen High School interpreter for the deaf and hard of hearing, was awarded a well-deserved Golden Apple Award for her dedication to innovative education.

resources are available and creatively manipulating them to effectively serve students in a population where they could be easily ignored, or even worse, sent out into the world unprepared. That's why Renner also expects students to learn how to advocate for themselves. As a result,

she has arranged a system for making students responsible for requesting interpreting services for school-related activities outside of the school day. "Due to Debbie's enthusiasm and hard work, these students have been

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Peer to Peer - Students from Mountain View High School and Covington Middle School meet to discuss their thoughts and impressions of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, as part of a cross-age mentoring program.

C.A.M.E.L. *Cross age mentoring project connects students from middle school to high school with a shared love of literacy*

Student collaboration isn't new, nor is having older students read or tutor younger students, but the latest project between Mountain View High School (MVHS) and Covington Middle School gave students from both middle and high school the opportunity to collaborate and help one another across the grade levels.

The brain child of Covington teachers Tyson Bjorge and Karrie Fansler and MVHS teacher Denise Bekkedahl, the C.A.M.E.L. (Cross Age Mentoring to Enrich Literacy)

project focused on inter-age discussion about the topics brought up in the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. The teachers came up with an innovative approach

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A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Setting the record straight



John Deeder
Superintendent

Last November, the Washington State Auditor released a performance audit report on school district travel practices. Evergreen Public Schools was one of 13 Washington school districts selected to have travel expenses audited for the 2005-06 school year. This audit was a result of Initiative 900 that was passed by the voters and called for a series of performance audits of government spending and policies.

Shortly after the audit was released, the local newspaper reported the findings in an article and wrote an editorial on this subject. I'd like to take this opportunity to share some of the facts that were not reported.

In July of 2006 the Evergreen Public Schools' Board of Directors and I went on a one-night retreat to Hood River, Oregon, so we could review the previous year and plan our work for the 2006-07 school year. This was in line with past practice and we never thought it would be an issue. When the audit team reviewed this expense, they mentioned that this was the type of thing they would mention in their report as an area where we could save money and be more efficient. This was the first time such a thing was ever mentioned by an audit team. However, we took this information, evaluated what we could do differently and changed our practice. The School Board and I

still retreat for a Friday and Saturday each July, but in 2007 and again in 2008 we held our retreat at Educational Service District 112 and saved the travel and hotel expense.

Just so you know, the cost of the 2006 retreat was \$2,200 for seven people (the five School Board members, the deputy superintendent and me) to travel to Hood River, spend one night at the Best Western Hotel, a conference room for two days, and meals.

That same year the Clark County Skills Center held a retreat at Skamania Lodge. Again, the auditor informed us that this would be mentioned in the report. Since Evergreen Public Schools is not the governing body for the Clark County Skills Center we argued that this should not be a mark against us in the audit. However, it was ruled that since Evergreen Public Schools serves as the host district for the Skills Center, it was our concern.

I have since worked with the board of the Clark County Skills Center to encourage an end to their practice of retreats.

The other issue in the audit for Evergreen Public Schools dealt with whether or not we were getting the best rates for hotels and airfare. The auditors did not cite any evidence that we are not, but mentioned that we needed to be sure we were. I can assure you that we are extremely careful in this area.

We always look for the cheapest airfares and when we attend conferences we stay at the conference hotel or a hotel that has shuttle service to the conference so we can avoid renting a car or paying cab fare to and from the meetings. The hotels we choose always offer us discounted rates

as part of the conferences we attend.

The article in The Columbian tried to tie Evergreen with the Vancouver School District on meals. There is no mention in the audit about expensive meals when your School Board and I travel. I can assure you that Evergreen Public Schools' Board of Directors is very conservative and pay very close attention to the cost of everything.

It is no secret that we are faced with severe budget issues this year and next. I did not feel I could let the information put out by our local paper just lie there. The School Board and I are very concerned about the budget, so when an article such as the one that ran late last year in the paper does not tell the whole story or provides the wrong information, I want to share with you the complete story.

We will continue to do everything we can to save money and work to keep your trust as we move forward this year.

Brown bag lunch with Superintendent

Have a question, comment, or just want to get to know a little more about the district? Bring your lunch and join Superintendent John Deeder the second Wednesday of each month from noon to 1:00 p.m. for an informal discussion about education at the Administrative Service Center, 13501 NE 28th St., Vancouver.

- Wednesday, February 11 - Evergreen Room
- Wednesday, March 11 - Evergreen Room
- Wednesday, April 8 - Evergreen Room
- Wednesday, May 13 - Columbia River Room
- Wednesday, June 10 - Evergreen Room

In sickness and health

Lynn Christopher believes in just jumping in. Which would explain why she was a member of the Riverview Elementary School Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) before her children were even attending the school, "I came to a Riverview PTO meeting when my son was still in first grade at a private school," explained Christopher. "Before the year ended, I was a PTO member at large for Riverview. Everyone was welcoming and it seemed like a great group to get involved in."

Fast forward to today, Christopher's second child, Emily is a fifth grader and her son is a student at Wy'east Middle School. During the past six years, Christopher has done everything at the school from helping in the library to being a teacher's aid in the Center Based Classrooms (CBC). This has all been in addition to her continuous involvement with the PTO and throughout her battle with breast cancer.

"I was diagnosed about three years ago and had chemotherapy for about a year and a half," said Christopher. "As soon as I could get

back into the school I did, because that's the thing about getting cancer young, life doesn't stop when you have young children and it doesn't leave any room for wallowing."

Christopher doesn't talk much about the cancer, adding only, "I was at school for what days I could be, some were harder than others." She'd much rather talk about all the activities for students that the PTO has been involved in, dances, special free movie nights for families and an evening scrapbook and stamping event she held for students. "There is a warm and structured environment here," she said. "It makes it easy to volunteer and become involved because the principal, teachers and staff are so accessible."

Riverview Principal Judi DesRochers said, "It's volunteers like Lynn that help make this school such a great place for kids. Her willingness to step in and do whatever needs to be done for the students and families at Riverview is unmatched. We can rely on her for ideas, positive energy and action." As she contemplates next year

Riverview Elementary School volunteer donates her time even while battling cancer



Making a Difference - Riverview Elementary School volunteer Lynn Christopher is one of the dedicated volunteers that helps provide activities for students and families.

"There is a warm and structured environment here. It makes it easy to volunteer and become involved because the principal, teachers and staff are so accessible."

with no students at Riverview, Christopher just smiled and said, "I live right down the street, so I know

that they'll probably still be calling me to run down whenever they need me."

Marching to Washington D.C.

Evergreen High School's Marching Band and Color Guard march in the Presidential Inaugural Parade

The Evergreen High School Marching Band and Color Guard was selected to represent the Northwest in the Presidential Inaugural Parade on January 20, 2009. More than 1,400 bands from across the country applied for the honor with less than 100 selected. The band performed the state song, "Washington, My Home."

The selection was emotional for the 150 marching band and color guard members, many of whom are seniors, who began preparing for and raising funds for the trip over a year ago. Senior Jacque Reyes described a process that began with a letter and culminated with a dream come true. "The application process began over a year ago and required students to first sign a letter of commitment to the marching band and then be able to meet financial deadlines for putting deposits on hotels, airfare and transportation," she explained. "We knew there was a chance we wouldn't be selected, but in order to get the best rates, we had to plan as if we were going to be."

In order to ensure that the money was not wasted, the band prepared a full itinerary of sightseeing in Washington,



Community Send-Off - Evergreen High School performed "Washington My Home" at a community send-off event to thank parents and community members for their support in giving the band the opportunity to travel to Washington D.C.

D.C. that would have happened regardless of whether or not Evergreen was chosen. "I was already very excited to go to Washington D.C.," said Reyes, a self-described "government geek," "getting to march in the parade made it the perfect trip."

Senior Zack Burdick agreed. "It sounds cliché, but this was the trip of a lifetime," he said. "We got to be a part of history in a way that none of our peers ever have. The fact that we were there for the inauguration of the first black President was unbelievable. It also felt like the perfect culmination of all the years of hard work and commitment we've given band."

That commitment and passion caught the eye of Congressman Brian Baird, who

was a strong supporter of Evergreen's bid. His office helped guide the application and gather written endorsements to highlight Evergreen's nationally recognized talent and credentials including their four-time win of the Pacific Northwest marching band title and earning the Sweepstakes awards in either Portland's Grand Floral or Starlight parades the past five years.

Community members also rallied around the group, with the local American Legion providing funds in addition to the band fundraisers. "We felt so supported," said Reyes. "We are grateful for the opportunity to have seen history, be a part of it and excited for the fact that for us, we've ensured that we're a class that won't ever be forgotten."

Under the Big Top to raise funds for kids

Annual Evergreen School District Foundation Auction supports teacher grants and Principal's Checkbook

This year's annual Evergreen School District Foundation auction promises to be the biggest yet, with the theme, "Under the Big Top, the Greatest Auction in Vancouver." Scheduled for Saturday, February 28, doors open at 5:00 p.m. for early registration with cocktail service beginning at 5:30 p.m.

The auction committee plans to

transform the Heathman Lodge meeting rooms into a carnival atmosphere where guests can enjoy games and entertainment in addition to bidding on silent auction items and participating in a live auction that will be held later in the evening. In order to encourage participation and bids, tickets will remain at \$50.00 a piece and are on sale now. "We realize these are leaner economic times for people," said Stephanie Taylor, Foundation Coordinator. "The committee made an intentional choice to keep prices the same, in order to encourage higher attendance and bidding that will benefit our students and schools."

Donations and large package items are already coming in. Standouts include a golf package, a spa trip for two at the Bonneville Hot Springs, a yacht-voyage for the 2009 Christmas ships and a private tour and wine tasting at the Sokol Blosser Vineyard.

"We've already seen some very generous donations," said Taylor, "but of course we always encourage the

We hope that a lot of people take the opportunity to come and enjoy themselves and support students and teachers in the process."

community and local businesses to provide us with whatever they can in order to help us get as much money into the classrooms as possible. We hope that a lot of people take the opportunity to come and enjoy themselves and support students and teachers in the process."

For information about donating items or purchasing tickets, please contact Stephanie Taylor at 604.4022.

Annual Phone-a-thon raised close to \$19,000

The Evergreen School District Foundation's annual Phone-a-thon, which ran for three weeks in October, raised almost \$19,000 in pledges. Student groups and staff called parents and community members asking for pledges that go to support teacher grants and the Principal's Checkbook program which meets basic needs for students.

Twelve student groups volunteered to call on various nights. In return, 40 percent of the funds they raised that night in returned pledges will be given to their particular group. "It's a great way for kids to get money to support activities that have had budget cuts, like field trips and uniforms," said Stephanie Taylor, Foundation Coordinator. "As always, we are extremely grateful to the community and parents who pledge to support students and teachers."

Student life

A year-long series following four high school students in Evergreen Public Schools

The students:



Learning Channel - Sean Fraser is enjoying his time working on the district-run Homework Helpline show, which provides a cable broadcast show that helps students with their questions live, twice a week.

Sean Fraser

Things have been busy for Sean Fraser, junior at Mountain View High School. In addition to the holiday season being full of activities for Key Club, this year he is participating in Evergreen Public Schools' Homework Helpline, a live cable television show produced by the district that offers live homework assistance to real questions from students.

"It's been a great experience so far," said Fraser. "We run the shows on Tuesdays and Thursdays and students can call or email their questions in. Student tutors on the show research the question and answer them on the air." The show answers all student questions, from equations and the Scientific Method to English questions. "The best part about the science questions," said Fraser "is how creative we can be in presenting them."

A teacher is on staff to help with presentation ideas and answers. Fraser serves as both a host and tutor and has

found the Homework Helpline crew to be "a great group, fun to work with and great to bounce ideas around with." He also appreciates how every student gets a call back to answer their question, even if there wasn't time during the live show. "We want to ensure that every student gets the help they need," he explained.

Fraser fully admits to enjoying the English and literature questions the best, especially since he is still writing for the school newspaper and recently was able to hear one of his favorite authors, Pulitzer Prize winner, Frank McCourt author of *Angela's Ashes*, who spoke at Mountain View High School. "It was an amazing experience," he said. "It's inspiring to meet someone like that who can take their experiences and share them in such an engaging way."

Samantha Cahill

Sam Cahill just finished out a successful volleyball season for Union High School. "It was a good season," reported the sophomore, "we ended up being 10th in the state which was pretty good." Now Cahill is gearing up for a winter full of club volleyball which will put her on a grueling schedule of practices two to three times a week with tournaments two to three times a month. "It's a lot of work," admitted Cahill, "but it's like I thought, I just need to keep working hard to stay on top of everything with school and volleyball."

Cahill is also excited for some upcoming visitors to the district. Over the summer she was one of a group of Evergreen Public Schools high school

students who traveled to Taiwan for a month of teaching English to elementary age students. Each of the high school students led week-long camps where they were the primary teachers of groups of 10-12 kids. "It was intense," Cahill laughed, "but still one of the best things I've ever done."

Each year the King Car Education Foundation brings a group of Taiwanese students to Evergreen Public Schools for two weeks during the winter and six or seven of the students that Cahill taught this summer will be in the group. "I'm so excited to see them," she said. "One of the teacher's aides from Taiwan has photos of all the kids on her Facebook page and I definitely hope to see the ones I know when they come visit."



Teaching in Taiwan -Samantha Cahill is looking forward to the visit from the King Car Education Foundation students from Taiwan, some of whom she taught during a summer 2008 exchange trip.

Initiative 728

An explanation on how I-728 affects the budget

In the fall of 2000 the voters of Washington State passed Initiative 728 (I-728) with a yes vote of 72 percent. The main purpose of I-728 was to bring new funds into the state's education system in the form of \$450 per student. I-728 was patterned after a plan proposed initially by then Governor Gary Locke. Governor Locke's plan was rejected by the legislature prior to the creation of I-728.

The plan, as passed by the voters, did not provide a new funding source for the initiative. The responsibility of paying for I-728 was given to the legislature with the options of passing a new dedicated tax or fee or cutting other programs to help pay for the initiative. The legislature did not create a new tax to fund I-728, choosing to instead reduce funding for other education programs.

The initiative authorized six main uses for the money: class size reductions in grades k-4; selected

class size reductions in grades 5-12; extended learning opportunities (tutoring programs, all-day kindergarten, summer school); additional professional development for teachers; early assistance for children requiring pre-kindergarten support; and building improvements associated with class size reductions and extended learning opportunities.

In Evergreen Public Schools, the funds have been used for four of the prescribed purposes, with the exception of building improvements, and spending on early assistance for pre-k children. In the 2007-08 school year, I-728 paid for approximately 107 certificated instructional staff, tutoring programs at each school, summer school, teachers' professional development, bi-lingual programs, and many other programs.

As the state is faced with an unprecedented

budget shortfall due to the economic downturn, one of the programs looked at for reduction or elimination is the I-728 program. In fact, Governor Christine Gregoire has proposed reducing funding for I-728 by 21 percent in the next two-year state budget cycle. This would amount to reductions of approximately \$2.2 million per year in funding for Evergreen Public Schools.

Any reduction in I-728 funding will be addressed by reducing spending. Currently the district is looking at an extended list of programs, or departments that can be reduced or eliminated if necessary. This list is being created with the goal of limiting, or avoiding impact directly on the classroom. As the list is completed it will be presented to the public at community forums scheduled in March. For a list of the budget community forums, please see the box on page 8.

Jasmine Rucker

When asked about the biggest change from the October article to this one, the bubbly Heritage High School freshman exclaimed, "I finally know where I'm going without looking at a map!" In addition to her increased familiarity with the school, Rucker also changed her classes, switching from freshman English to Pre-AP (Advanced Placement) English. Though the switch caused her to have to change her entire schedule, for Rucker it was worth it. "I feel a lot more productive in this class," she explained. "I feel as if we do a lot more projects than daily work and that's easier for me to keep up."

It was clearly a good move, since when asked about what classes she's enjoying most she listed both her AP classes, English and biology. "For me, that is one of the best things about high school versus middle school," she explained. "In high school it's much more



Lunchtime Laughter - Jasmine Rucker spends her lunch enjoying time with a table full of friends, many whom she has met this year.

flexible for you to take your level of class and you can switch if it's not meeting your needs."

Rucker definitely knows what

she needs to do to stay grounded. That includes her involvement in her church's theocratic ministry school which requires her to

Zack Burdick

Evergreen High School senior, Zack Burdick is having the biggest year of anyone and it's not just because he's a senior. Burdick just returned home from performing with the Evergreen High School Marching Band and Color Guard in the President's Inaugural Parade. "It's unbelievable," he said. "It was like the culmination of years of work and the perfect end to a high school career."

Burdick and the band practiced every day after school for hours after returning from winter break, but the additional practice time didn't phase him. "That's why we got there," he said. "Because our whole band was working towards this, everyone there was willing to do the work to be great."

In addition to the parade, Burdick was also thrilled to see Washington

D.C. The group spent days there touring, all of which had been set up almost a year in advance. "They didn't know if we would be selected to play," he explained, "so we had a full itinerary just in case." An itinerary that included the Library of Congress, a sight that Burdick had always wanted to see. "How can you not be excited to see a giant library?" he asked, completely serious.

Though bound for the University of Portland, Burdick has barely had time to think about it, since as a senior and a section leader he had a stream of interviews by newspapers and television stations regarding their selection for the parade. "I had some bad senioritis," he said. "But this definitely helped me through it."



Senior Final - Zack Burdick (pictured with Evergreen High School Band Director Steve Kuske) is ending his final year of band with a trip to perform in the Presidential Inaugural parade.

School of Distinction

Mill Plain Elementary earns School of Distinction for second consecutive year



Two Years of Distinction - Superintendent John Deeder congratulated Mill Plain Elementary School Principal Deb Alden on Mill Plain being recognized as a School of Distinction for the second consecutive year.

It's been a big school year so far for Mill Plain Elementary School. Not long after Deb Alden was chosen as a Distinguished Principal by her peers at the Association of Washington State Principals, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) released the names of the Schools of Distinction for 2007-08, revealing that Mill Plain had made the list for the second consecutive year. Only 21 schools in the state received the award both years. A total of 99 schools across the state were recognized by former Washington state Superintendent Terry Bergeson with the designation of School of Distinction. Officially titled the "State

Superintendent's Learning Improvement Award," schools are celebrated for the outstanding improvement in achievement gains made by their students, as measured by their Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) scores. The top five percent of schools in each level - elementary, middle and high school - receive the awards.

Mill Plain was the only school in the district to be recognized this year and one of only two schools in the district last year. Principal Deb Alden said, "It's a testament to how hard our staff is working to get students a quality education and help them make gains each year. This award recognizes their commitment to kids."

"For me, that is one of the best things about high school versus middle school. In high school it's much more flexible for you to take your level of class."

Collaboration for quality education

Second grade teachers at Pioneer Elementary School make collaboration part of the lesson plan



Collaborative Efforts - The second grade teachers at Pioneer Elementary School meet twice a week to develop lesson plans, talk about curriculum and discuss classroom methods in order to provide the best education for all their students.

They're four very different women, different backgrounds, strengths and experiences, but for the four second grade teachers at Pioneer Elementary School, the ability to embrace and leverage that diversity into collaborative teaching methods

is the best thing that could have happened for their students.

Lisa Albrecht, Kirsten Bergh, Jenn Davis and Carley Houlihan are all relatively new to Pioneer. Bergh and Houlihan have been there two years and Albrecht and Davis are in their

first year. Some of them are new to teaching second grade, having been with older or younger students in the past. The challenges of learning a new school, teaching a new grade with new lesson plans and in Albrecht and Davis' case, learning new state teaching laws and requirements can be daunting, but for this group, those differences have been channeled into a collaborative group method that is not only benefiting their teaching styles, but an entire grade level of students.

Each week the group meets on Wednesdays and Fridays for an hour to discuss lesson plans, challenges they're facing in the classroom and focus on what they can do as a group to improve the learning of the students as a whole. The school's professional development specialist, Julie Smith, also joins them when she can. "In our minds, it just made sense," explained Houlihan, who came from a collaborative teaching model in Bellevue School District. "Five heads are better than one. Multiple teachers working together to use whatever tools they've gained

from their experiences to help kids, that gets to the real heart of what it means to teach."

The meetings have translated into an alignment in teaching curriculum across the grade level. Davis explained, "There are basically three levels per lesson depending on where a student's aptitude on that subject is. Collaboration has enabled us to streamline those lessons and strengthen each part of them so that every student is being reached at their personal level. The variation in our experiences with different grade levels has benefited us by giving us a barometer by which to see the level that students were at earlier and where they're headed, as well as what skills they will need in higher grades."

Albrecht who came from Gresham School District is used to having a staff assistant in every classroom. She said, that experience taught her that teaching is not something you do alone. Smith added "There are studies that pinpoint isolation as one of the top reasons for teacher burnout. The idea that you have no one to talk to about

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Gateway to Technology Gives Students Skills to Take the Lead

In six short weeks, students in Todd Elgin's sixth grade Gateway to Technology class at Frontier Middle School go from drafting - drawing and measuring with a straight ruler and pencil - to building their own Rube-Goldberg device. A Rube-Goldberg is a machine that must incorporate all six of the simple machines in a continuous flow. It's quite a feat for students, some of whose only prior experience with a ruler was to make straight lines. Within the next two years of middle school, students who choose to continue the class as an elective will find themselves using advanced 3D modeling programs, building working robots and model cars. "The rate of skill development in this class is astounding," said Elgin.

Gateway to Technology is an entry program for Project Take the Lead, an engineering focused elective at high school. Gateway to Technology gives middle school students the opportunity to have their interest piqued by engineering and the different forms it can take. All students take the class their sixth grade year, in seventh and

eighth grade, they choose it as an elective. "The purpose behind this program is to get students interacting with engineering," explained Elgin. "It's different than the old school way of doing engineering class because this way we give all students the opportunity to at least give engineering a try in an environment where they can work at their own pace."

Elgin pointed out that some of the best benefits of the Gateway to Technology program are the advanced nature of the computer and technology that students are working with. "Students today have the ability to visualize in ways that we didn't when we were in school. Part of quality education is providing them with classes like this where they can work with professional grade computer modeling programs and robotics to see where this could take them as a career and in their own lives."

Frontier was the first school in Washington to implement Gateway to Technology. All Evergreen Public Schools middle schools now offer it. Elgin estimated that he sees approximately 700 students a year, all sixth graders at the school, two-thirds of the seventh grade and one-third of the eighth grade. "The difficulty we find in the older grades is that students have to choose this as an elective over choir and band," explained Elgin. "The great thing is that by getting all of the sixth grade students in, we get a higher percentage of girls who



Leading Technology - Students in the Union High School Take the Lead Program use cutting edge technology to build complicated machines in order to learn more about engineering.

participate through middle school, which is one of the difficulties in the engineering field."

That's one of the reasons that John Akers, who teaches Project Lead the Way at Union High School, is such a strong believer in the value of the program. "The purpose of Gateway to Technology and Project Lead the Way is to break some of the stereotypes about what engineering means, at Frontier we've seen almost a 50/50 ratio of boys to girls which we're still working to achieve at the high school level."

Akers was instrumental in bringing the program to the district when he worked in the Career and Technical Education department. He was so impressed by the program that he chose to return to the high schools to teach it. "The best results I see from this program are that the basic crux of it is teaching students to problem solve. Those are skills that will help you no matter what field you're in,"

said Akers.

The class is offered as an elective at the high school level as well which Akers doesn't mind. "I like the flexibility of letting kids work at their own pace," he said. "You can spend more time focusing on student understanding, though next year Union will be able to offer this class as fulfillment of the physics class requirement. That will change things a little bit, but this is a very flexible curriculum, one that schools can customize to the abilities and expertise of their staff."

The final benefit that both Akers and Elgin focus on is that the classes make science and math attractive and applicable. "Students now want to know how classes are going to benefit them in life," said Akers. "These are programs that we can say, if you choose to take them, you will build knowledge and learn skills that will prepare you for whatever career you decide to pursue."



Straight Line to Technology - Middle School Students in the Gateway to Technology program go from learning basic drafting skills to building intricate Rube-Goldberg machines.

EPS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Quality education and volunteering



Troy Thomas
School Board Member

What is a volunteer? The dictionary defines a volunteer as: a person who performs a service willingly and without pay.

Volunteers come in many shapes and sizes and are not limited to the role they play in the lives of children. As parents or custodial caregivers, we take for granted that the role we play every day is, in effect, that of a volunteer. Taking a child to sports practice or events, after school programs, or trips to the library and performing daily tasks, such as dropping off and picking up a child from daycare or helping with homework, are everyday examples of volunteerism that we demonstrate for

our children.

To quote Mark Twain, "Action speaks louder than words but not nearly as often"

The family support role is critical in the life of children. Giving your time to help a child understand, learn, and play can be critical in their development into confident, positive, productive adults.

Taking the time to read with a child or problem solve can help build skills to be successful as life-long learners. That time spent demonstrates that volunteering your time has positive results. As those children become adults, they will demonstrate and pass on the characteristics they were taught and the cycle begins.

Take your actions to the next level! Children learn by example and apply by example. Taking a child along to volunteer helps them to understand the positive contribution that they can make. It could be as simple as helping someone in their peer group to read, learn a new skill, or join in

a group to resolve a problem. These actions are forms of volunteering that can build positive relationships and give back to the community.

A child's education can come in many forms and take on many roles. Education is not limited to the classroom. For children, volunteering outside the school day helps build a positive skill set that contributes to quality learning for a life time. The development of those skills begins at home and is applied in the classroom.

We have many volunteers that contribute their time in our schools from students to adults. It's their dedication, along with the teachers and staff in our public education system that promotes quality education.

If you have an interest in working with students in Evergreen Public Schools, contact the principal at the school you are interested in volunteering at. There are also volunteer opportunities through the Big Brother Big Sister program of Southwest Washington or the Evergreen School District Foundation.

Mentoring

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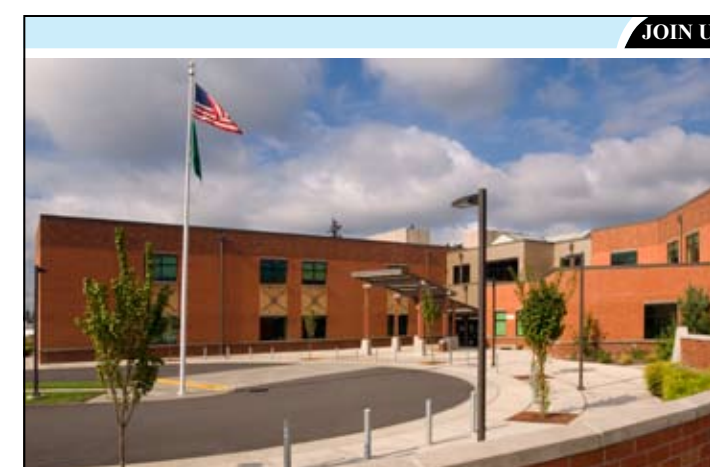
which involved 70 Pre-AP (pre-Advanced Placement) literature class students from MVHS and 50 seventh grade students from Covington, pairing up to exchange anonymous weekly letters that discussed themes from the novel. The idea was to get students exploring, thinking and writing as well as engaging with one another about the important social and literary questions raised.

"We saw this project as a way to give our students a personal connection to the book," said Bekkedahl. "The idea of getting to write and receive letters from an anonymous source for discussion just made it that much more engaging for everyone."

Mountain View High School student Jessica Lee agreed, "Through our letters I saw my buddy actually become more aware of in-depth ideas and concepts," she said. Fellow MVHS student Lauren Lackaff added, "I want to be a teacher when I grow up, so this experience really helped me understand more about that age group. I think it made some students in my class realize that they are role models for younger students."

"Another benefit of this project," explained Fansler, "was that these are students who are not at schools that would otherwise be connected. Covington does not feed into MVHS, so now we have students who have formed relationships with other students they may never have met otherwise."

The culmination of the project was a meeting between all of the formerly anonymous pairs at an event at MVHS. Students met their partners face-to-face and then sat down to work on their final project reflections. The MVHS students helped the seventh grade students find information for their novel reflections, working with them on different ideas to explore. Then, all students sat down for a viewing of the original movie version of the book after which the seventh grade students offered insights to the 10th grade students about how the movie version compared to the actual text. Their findings were used for the 10th grade student's analysis papers. At the end of the day, MVHS student Sydney Sampson said, "It shows kind of a before and after. You saw yourself in the seventh graders and then you see how much you have learned and improved."



Coffee & Conversation

Interested in knowing about the district initiative of quality education for all students? Have a question or comment to share? Join members of the Evergreen Public Schools' Board of Directors for informal coffee and conversation sessions, held every other month at one of the district's middle schools.

YOU ARE INVITED

Thursday, January 29, 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.
Covington Middle School - Media Center

Friday, March 6, 7:30 - 8:30 a.m.
Wy'east Middle School - Media Center

Tuesday, May 5, 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.
Cascade Middle School - Media Center

Tuesday, July 14, 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Frontier Middle School - Media Center



YOUR EVERGREEN SCHOOLS

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Evergreen Public Schools

Big shoes to fill

Union High School senior Dustin Flath takes his love of art one step further

Dustin Flath is amazed at how quickly things can change. Not too long ago, Flath was contemplating college in Canada or New York after graduation from Union High School. He's always been interested in art and planned to study it in college, but life took a turn when he attended a Senior Saturday event being held at the Portland Art Institute and redesigned an old shoe. "At the Senior Saturday event, the attendees had the option of either redesigning a purse or an old shoe, I'd started painting shoes over the summer, so I went with that and the faculty member overseeing the project seemed to really like what I did," explained Flath.

The faculty member liked it so much that she invited Flath back to be a part of an upcoming art show, entitled "In Your Own Backyard," which along

with Flath, featured four other artists from the community. The show ran through the month of November and Flath was able to showcase three of his shoe designs as well as a large mural that he hand painted onto the wall. "The design of the show was meant to be a showcase of urban art," explained Portland Art Institute spokeswoman Allena Baker. "The other artists showcased photography, painting and tattoo design, furniture art and graphic and collage art, Dustin's shoes and mural were a perfect addition to those collections."

Flath's shoes are Vans that he paints with fabric markers. His designs are intricate and colorful and always unique. "I get the inspiration for them from my own life and experiences," he said. He has painted a few pairs for friends, but the art show opened

up huge doors for him in terms of making contacts and getting noticed. He has now applied to the Portland Art Institute and hopes to attend there next fall. An avid snowboarder, he has already been in contact with several of the major extreme sports companies and at least one has invited him to

design some samples with their logo for consideration.

"I still can't believe that this has happened," mused Flath. "It's all been so fast and it's so cool to see where it's already taken me. I'm just going to keep enjoying every minute of it while I can."



Wearable Art - Dustin Flath's hand-painted Vans have already caught the attention of staff at the Portland Art Institute, they invited him to show his art with several other local artists and he is currently pitching designs to several major snowboarding companies.

Collaboration

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your class and that the weight of everything rests solely on your shoulders is a huge burden. In the professional learning community (PLC) model, teachers share lesson plans and ideas but they also work through specific student challenges and help address them in a way that supports everyone in the ultimate goal, providing quality education."

For Bergh, that has absolutely been the case, "Collaboration has raised the quality of the education I'm able to provide. The energy that we take from collaboration translates into an engagement and excitement that students can only benefit from."

Houlihan points out that an important byproduct of the collaboration model is that

students are viewed not as "my" students, but "our" students. "I find myself wanting to know the names of every second grade student at the school," she said, "not just the ones in my class. There is a responsibility for the education of the community as a whole which I think is very important."

All the teachers agree that much of the credit goes to new Pioneer Principal Jenny Roberts, who has emphasized the importance of the collaborative teaching method and worked to create an environment that fosters that. "Jenny has been the driving force behind getting all the teachers here into some sort of collaborative model," said Houlihan. "She supports wholeheartedly the 'our' kids model and the results of that are showing in the quality of education that we're providing."

Community Forums Scheduled for March

Over the past few months, committees comprised of parents, community members and district staff have been meeting to discuss the impact of the school district budget shortfalls in the general budget, facilities and technology. These groups are putting together recommendations on how best to use what resources are available in order to continue to provide the best education possible for students throughout the district.

In March, community forums will be held for the public to hear and review committee recommendations on each topic before they are presented to the Evergreen Public Schools' Board of Directors for implementation. Separate forums will be held for each topic. The dates, locations and subjects of the forums are as follows:

Facilities	Tuesday, March 3	6:30 - 8:30 p.m.	Evergreen High School Media Center
Technology	Wednesday, March 4	10:00 - 11:30 a.m.	ASC - Tan Complex Evergreen Room
Facilities	Thursday, March 5	10:00 - 11:30 a.m.	ASC - Tan Complex Evergreen Room
Technology	Thursday, March 5	6:30 - 8:00 p.m.	Union High School Media Center
Budget	Monday, March 9	6:30 - 8:00 p.m.	Union High School Media Center
Budget	Thursday, March 12	6:30 - 8:00 p.m.	Evergreen High School Media Center
Budget	Friday, March 13	10:00 - 11:30 a.m.	ASC - Tan Complex Evergreen Room

Golden Apple

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able to realize their full potential when it comes to taking advantage of both social and learning opportunities important to their development as people," said Larson. "She gives these students the skills and the confidence to solve problems on their own in high school and beyond."

That includes Renner working with a German teacher to adapt German curriculum and then personally purchasing a program to teach herself German so she could tutor the student. Or working with an autistic student who was having multiple accidents on the motorized

scooter he was using for his rheumatoid arthritis. Renner modified the Washington Driver's Guide so that it was appropriate for the driver of a motorized scooter to help the student learn valuable skills in responsibility and consequences. The manual was so professional she has been approached to implement it district-wide.

Renner never stops thinking of new and original ways to help the students in Larson's class learn, grow and surmount challenges they never thought they could. One of the most significant things she's done is develop a program that simulates real math experiences. It teaches skills around receiving

an income, balancing a checkbook and comes with late-payment penalties and junk mail distractions. It has been called by a colleague "The best and most complete program of its kind."

Renner and the other recipients were formally recognized at an award ceremony in Seattle on January 16. In response to receiving the award, Renner said, "Overall, I feel humbled by being chosen, as there are numerous individuals connected to education that deserve to receive such an award. The opportunity to work with the students has taught me to think outside the box in order to find creative ways of presenting information to them."