

Gillespie “Golden Onion Award” honors teachers

Award provides local educators grant funds

Longtime Walla Walla residents Dr. Mike Gillespie and his wife Sue recently established the Golden Onion Award to provide school supplies, equipment and professional development funds to Walla Walla educators.

The Golden Onion Award will be presented annually to three district teachers representing elementary (P-5), middle school (6-8) and high school (9-12) grade levels. Recipients will receive \$500 each for use in their classroom or to better their teaching skills.

The awards will be peer nominated and peer judged. Nomination forms are now available at the Walla Walla Public Schools district office and on the school district website: www.wwps.org.

Nomination forms will be accepted for consideration until Monday, May 2, 2011. Recipients will be honored during the Walla Walla Public Schools All Staff Breakfast June 10, 2011. The Gillespie Teacher Development Fund is a component fund of the Blue Mountain Community Foundation with an underlying investment at Edward Jones.

“Teachers are very important to us and they need our support. We want to make sure they are appreciated and recognized.”

Dr. Mike Gillespie



(L-R) Mike and Sue Gillespie celebrate the announcement of the Golden Onion Award with Superintendent Mick Miller.

“The Gillespie Teacher Development Fund was a gift to my husband Dr. Mike Gillespie for our 45th wedding anniversary,” said Sue Gillespie. “Mike and his brother set up a similar foundation in Texas in honor of their mother Velma Freeman-Gillespie and Mike’s aunt Zelma Freeman-Root who both taught at Borger Junior High School in Texas for more than 25 years.”

Walla Walla
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Miller seeks input on facilities planning

“Educate, Listen, Plan” focuses on Wa-Hi and Lincoln needs



Superintendent **Mick Miller** visits with members of the *Grandmothers' Roundtable* as part of his “Educate, Listen and Plan” facilities pre-planning initiative he will carry out this winter.

Per this plan, he will be educating staff, students and community members on past district facilities studies which place Walla Walla High School and Lincoln Alternative High School at the top of the list. He will be listening to their thoughts and ideas on these issues and then be working in collaboration with the community to develop facility improvement plans based on this process.

The most recent Community Facilities Task Force report, led by community member **Dan Reid** and completed in June 2010, cited high school facilities to be in greatest need of improvement.

*See more **Facilities Planning** page 4 & 5*

“The high school facilities have served Walla Walla students well for years, but they are aging. Our community and staff know best how to modernize and expand them. Our job is to listen to what people want in high school facilities and work to make it happen.”

Mick Miller, Superintendent

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Blue Ridge “Playground of Dreams” comes true

New playground equipment for the “Playground of Dreams” in memory of former student **Jeremy Richards** was ordered and will be installed this spring. Richards passed away in 2008 from brain cancer.

Vast fundraising efforts, including a \$5000 donation from Coffey Communications, have helped fund the project to replace the school’s 30-year-old playground equipment. Blue Ridge is also taking advantage of a 50 percent discount on the equipment.

“These generous donations have made a dream become reality,” Blue Ridge Principal **Kim Doepker** said. “This project will help us provide a safe and fun playground for years to come.”

Special thanks to district parents, community leaders and sisters **Staci Wanichuk** and **Cassie Rothstrom** for playing a key role in the fundraising effort.

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Mick Miller
Superintendent

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Superintendent Miller praises community support

On behalf of over 6,000 students I wish to thank the Walla Walla community for their support of children and the Walla Walla Public Schools. We are so grateful for your encouragement, backing and assistance. Without strong community support, we could not function. Thank you!

Welcome to 2011! While many wonderful events will be held this year, I am already excited for June as over 400 high school seniors will graduate from Walla Walla and Lincoln High Schools. I am so proud of these young people and the staff who have served them through their years in our schools.

Given the increasing levels of rigor and accountability, I believe these are the best prepared graduates in the history of our District. Our graduates will do incredible things.

Having completed my first six months as superintendent, I continue to be thankful for the opportunity to work in this excellent community. I have had the opportunity to meet with scores of community members, but know there are so many more whom I have yet to meet. I would love to hear from you.

If you have a question, comment, concern, or compliment... or if you'd simply like to say hello, please let me know! Email is mmiller@wwps.org and direct office number is 526-6714.

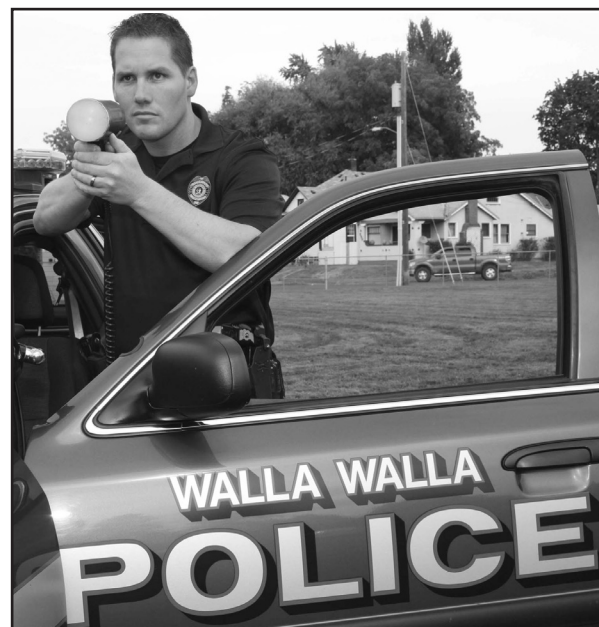
District teams with police and parents to improve school zone safety program

With four students being hit by cars on their way to school this fall, Walla Walla Public Schools has stepped up efforts to improve school zone safety.

The district has teamed with the citizen's action group: *To and From - The Safe Travels Alliance*. Parents **Kathryn Southwick-Hess** and **Katie Christianson** formed the group to find solutions to this growing safety concern. The district also joined forces with the City of Walla Walla and Walla Walla County to form the *Walla Walla Aggressive Drivers Response Team* to increase police patrols in school zones.

2010-11 School Zone Safety Program Progress Report:

- Washington Traffic Safety Commission school zone safety curriculum now in use at all schools.
- Kathryn Southwick-Hess is working with area hospitals to include school zone safety information with newborn information packets.
- Katie Christianson is collaborating with the City of Walla Walla to apply for state grant funding for flashing school zone speed limit signs for Berney and Blue Ridge Elementary Schools.
- *To and From - The Safe Travels Alliance* is also working on efforts to increase awareness and training of safe walking and biking practices with parents, staff and students.



District Resource Officer **Kevin Braman** is part of the *Aggressive Drivers Response Team* formed this school year to create a zero tolerance policy for traffic infractions near schools.

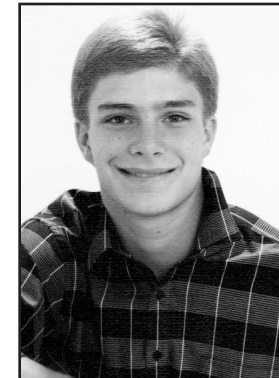
Motorists beware! Expect to see additional police officers while driving through school zones.

Graduates talk about school experiences through *Alumni Connections* video series

Walla Walla Public Schools has created a new video project this school year featuring some of its graduates.

The *Alumni Connections* series provides a venue for graduates to reflect on their school years. They talk about how teachers and staff have had a positive impact on their lives.

The short, three to four minute features will be posted on the district's web site, aired on Charter Cable Channel 3, used for teacher recruitment, community presentations and new family communication packets.



Craig Sievertsen
Class of 1991

Learn more about Craig Sievertsen at www.wwps.org

2010-11 *Alumni Connections* featured graduates

- Craig Sievertsen (Now online: www.wwps.org)
- Veronica Esparza (final production January 2011)
- Lindsey Mahan (final production January 2011)
- Abby Van Donge (final production January 2011)
- Megan Clubb (final production February 2011)
- Gary Hanson (final production March 2011)

School board officers elected

Dr. Jim Lehmann was elected in December for a one year term to serve as president of the school board. Lehmann, a long-time College Place Public Schools teacher, is now an online instructor for the University of Wisconsin-Stout and WSU.

Lehmann is an active bike rider -- road and mountain bikes. He enjoys going to the gym, bird watching, photography and travelling.

Max Carrera was elected to serve a one year term as vice president. Carrera works for the Department of Corrections. Carrera enjoys reading books on faith and leadership and spending time with his family.



Dr. Jim Lehmann



Max Carrera

Community Connections

Food drive replenishes food bank shelves



Pioneer Middle School students greeted shoppers at Albertsons with sounds of the holidays to encourage them to make a donation in support of the district's Holiday food drive "Fill the Bus" event.

Nearly 5000 pounds of food was collected during this one day event held at four area grocery stores.

This year's Holiday Food Drive netted more than 10,000 pounds of food for the Blue Mountain Action Council Food Bank. **Gail McGee**, who manages the food bank, said this donation makes a big difference for area families.

"We have seen a tremendous increase in need this year," McGee said. "It seems each month we are serving more families in our area."

Pacific Power awards Edison for energy savings

Pacific Power recently presented the district with two Certificates of Energy Resource Stewardship.

The certificates are in recognition of the school district's commitment to energy efficiency for completing the installation of energy efficiency improvements at Edison Elementary through Pacific Power's Energy FinAnswer programs.

The school district will be saving over 110,000 kilowatt hours annually. Pacific Power provided \$20,151 in incentives to help with the installation of the energy efficiency improvements.

"The Certificate of Energy Resource Stewardship recognizes organizations that show a commitment to energy efficiency and the sustainability of resources," said **Bill Clemens**, *Pacific Power Regional Manager*. "These kind of investments will pay dividends to the school district for many years."

Educate, Listen and Plan

Facilities Improvement Effort

Timeline of past and current facility improvement efforts

2006 Bond *Summary of 2006 bond measure: New Walla Walla High School & on-campus stadium, new Lincoln Alternative High School, new Edison Elementary, and new Transportation and Support Services facility. This measure was not approved by Walla Walla voters.*

What did the district learn from the 2006 bond measure?

- Community wants more involvement in bond planning
- Walla Walla prefers one project at a time
- Keep it simple
- Edison Elementary is the top priority
- Study additional options for improving high schools



2007 Bond (voters approve new Edison Elementary)

- New Edison Elementary was the only project on the ballot



2007 High School Facilities Task Force

- This community group was formed in the fall of 2007
- John Rowley and Cindy Meyer chaired this group
- This group studied high school issues for nearly one year



2009 Community Facilities Task Force

- Community Task Force reconvened in the fall of 2009
- Dan Reid chaired this group
- Final report submitted to school board in June 2010

Community Task Force findings & recommendations

- Walla Walla and Lincoln High Schools: **# 1 priority**
- Complete Walla Walla High School project in phases
- Pioneer HVAC, classrooms and gym: **#2 priority**
- New preschool facility: **#3 priority** (district is currently studying options for a new facility)
- Maintenance plan: **#4 priority** (district is developing state approved facilities maintenance plan)

Edison State Matching Dollars

The \$3.4 million state matching dollars from the Edison project were reinvested to build the Southeast Washington Transportation Cooperative. This project generated \$4 million in additional state match dollars to fund the new Support Services facility.

The two-phase, nearly \$9 million project was completed with state matching dollars, Park Street property sale proceeds and investment interest. The entire project was completed without adding costs to local bond rates.

High School Task Force findings & recommendations

- One comprehensive high school only (Walla Walla is not ready for two comprehensive high schools)
- Lincoln facility needs to be replaced
- College Place high school-age students will continue attending Walla Walla schools
- Improve Walla Walla High School in phases
- Pursue a Vocational Skills Center

Pioneer energy grants and state matching dollars to improve Pioneer HVAC, boiler and lighting (Summer 2011 completion). Gym and classroom needs remain.

Why should Walla Walla Public Schools consider improving high school facilities now?

- Current high school facilities are not meeting today's needs
- Student achievement linked to quality facilities
- Interest rates are at all-time lows
- Construction costs are down
- Facility needs are not going away
- Costs will eventually increase

Community Facilities Task Force facility improvement recommendations

1 Priority: High Schools

High school facilities were found to be in greatest need of improvement. The Task Force recommends that the School Board address Walla Walla High School deficiencies in phases, focusing on the highest priorities: science and math classrooms, the commons and overcrowding. Lincoln Alternative High School should be replaced in a single project. Continue to pursue the Southeastern Washington branch of the Tri Tech Skills Center, as this opportunity proceeds through the legislature.

2 Priority: Pioneer Middle School

Replace an antiquated boiler system and expand the air conditioning system to the entire building. Expand and remodel the existing gym and construct an additional gym. Add classroom space to relieve overcrowding.

3 Priority: Blue Ridge/Preschool Facility

Relocate the preschool to a different site and return Blue Ridge to a neighborhood elementary school.

4 Priority: Comprehensive Facility Maintenance Program

Task Force members feel strongly that the district should continue to have a strong facility maintenance program. The program should be based on research and data. Consider using outside resources and a combination of school district personnel and community experts to help develop and monitor a district-wide facilities maintenance plan.

Task Force Membership

- Dan Reid (Chair)
- Darcey Fugman-Small
- Mary Koch
- Jim Peterson
- Pat Johnston
- Karen Carman
- Craig Sievertsen,
- Gay Buissink,
- Jim Sporleder
- Allan Gillespie
- Ruth Ladderud
- Scott Krivoshein
- Dan Hess
- Jerry Zahl

See entire 2010 facilities report online at: www.wwps.org (click on A to Z: Community Facilities Task Report)

Community Survey (visit www.wwps.org for additional survey questions)

- | | | | |
|--|-----|----|-----------|
| 1. Do you agree with the Community Facilities Task Force recommendations? | Yes | No | Undecided |
| 2. Do you believe Walla Walla and Lincoln High Schools need facility improvements? | Yes | No | Undecided |
| 3. Should Lincoln High School be replaced with a new building at its current location? | Yes | No | Undecided |
| 4. Do you support reinvesting state matching dollars into district facility needs? | Yes | No | Undecided |
| 5. List top facility improvement needs at Walla Walla High School: | | | |

6. When should improvements at Walla Walla and Lincoln High Schools be addressed? 2011 2012 3-5 years

7. Comments: (send in additional sheets or take online survey:: www.wwps.org)

Mail or deliver survey to:
Walla Walla Public Schools
364 S. Park Street (Attn: Mark Higgins)
Walla Walla, WA 99362

Safe Routes to Schools grant helps fund Reser Road improvements

Walla Walla County is expected to receive \$330,000 in June from the Washington State Department of Transportation *Safe Routes to Schools* grant program to help fund a \$1.7 million project to improve Reser Road from Howard to Fern Streets.

If all goes as scheduled, the project will begin June 13 and be completed August 19. The road will be closed during the construction phase.

A list recently released from the Washington State Department of Transportation places Walla Walla's project in the highest ranking category, citing the grant is most likely to receive funding. According to the state's list, Walla Walla's Reser Road project ranks 5th among the 124 *Safe Routes to Schools* applications submitted.

Funding requests will go to legislators during the 2011 legislative session. A final funding decision will be made by June 2011.

The Walla Walla County Public Works Department submitted the grant request last fall to secure some of the funding needed to make sidewalk, signs, bridge, roadway and bike lane improvements on Reser Road. This street provides access to Prospect Point Elementary and Walla Walla High School and is heavily used by students and families.



Washington State Department of Transportation *Safe Routes to Schools* Coordinator Charlotte Claybrooke (L) toured Walla Walla this fall to meet with law enforcement officials, Superintendent Mick Miller, concerned parents and Walla Walla County Public Works officials about improvements needed on Reser Road from Howard to Fern Streets.

The visit was part of a grant application submitted by Walla Walla County. The state recently ranked this project 5th out of 124 applications and is expected to be funded at \$330,000 to help improve Reser Road.

Prospect Point students help feed local animals



Prospect Point Elementary 5th grade students **Campbell Schulke** and **Alice Gibson** organized a Pet Food Drive that netted nearly 2000 pounds of pet food and basic pet supplies for the Blue Mountain Humane Society. The Pet Food Drive was coordinated by the school's leadership program under the direction of teacher **Kate Van Cleve**.

State Attorney General McKenna visits Pioneer Middle School to talk about gangs

Earlier this school year Washington state Attorney General **Rob McKenna** visited Pioneer Middle School and was interviewed by 8th grade student **John Martin** as part of a student produced video documentary on gangs.

In November, McKenna proposed an anti-gang bill to state legislators calling for spending \$10 million for gang prevention and intervention, stiffer sentence enhancements for gang crimes and empowering local governments and property owners to keep gangs out of certain areas.

He told Martin students are often the key to curbing gang recruitment.

"John and all the students in the school district can help by reaching out to their classmates and making them feel included," McKenna said. "They don't have to join a gang to have a sense of belonging, they can be involved in their school."

Berney Bulldog dad makes reading a priority

Tony Avalos sets aside time to support children

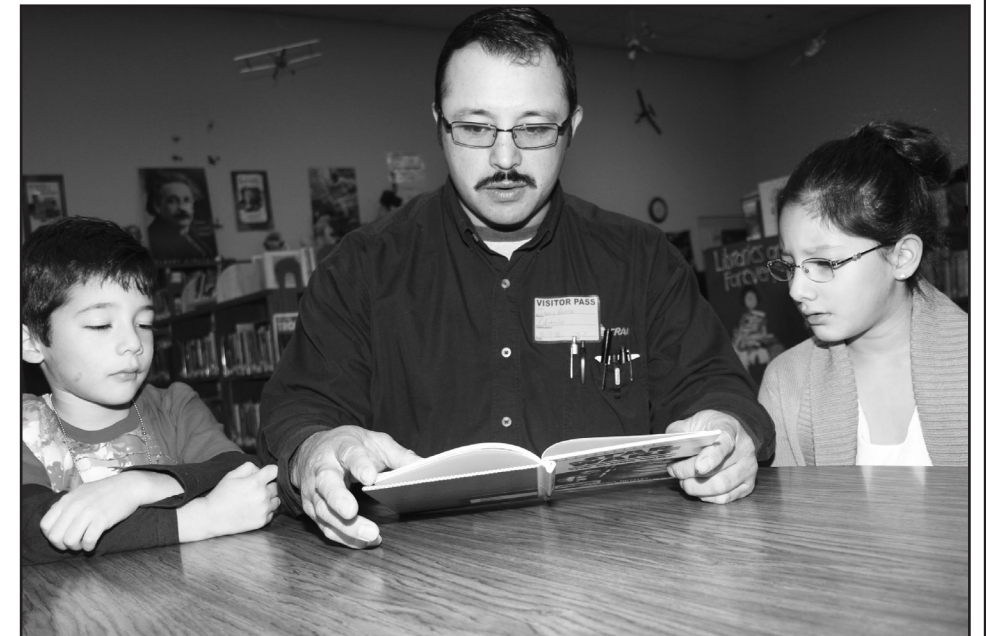
Most mornings before the school bell rings at Berney Elementary, you'll find **Tony Avalos** in the school's library reading books with his children.

Avalos, who learned English as his second language as a child, believes it is important to model a love of reading and learning to his children. He remembers the challenges he had in school and wants his children to have more opportunities for achievement.

When he received notice his daughter was struggling with her reading development, he took action.

"We have set up a routine to make time to read most mornings before school starts," Avalos said. "I want my children to be successful in school and believe it's important to be involved in their education."

The results of his intervention plan have been amazing. His daughter is now reading above grade level and says she and her brother love the extra time with their dad.



"I want my children to be successful in school and believe it's important to be involved in their education."

Tony Avalos
Berney Elementary parent

Lincoln High School students learn life lessons from Wheatland Village residents

Lincoln Alternative High School student **Alyssa Throw** interviews Wheatland Village resident **Laree Miller** as part of a school writing project to develop a biography on her life.

The students selected interview topics ranging from favorite holidays and high school memories to relationship advice and lessons learned in life. The students presented their biographies to the Wheatland Village residents in December. In addition to improving their writing skills, the students also enhanced their social skills, worked on holding a conversation and making eye contact and listening.

"The project has been amazing!," said Lincoln teacher **Marci Knauff**. "I have seen a dramatic improvement in the writing skills of my students."

