

PROSPECTOR PRIDE

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Humbolt Elementary School and Seneca Elementary School

Congratulations to Sonna Smith, 2024 Crystal Apple Award Recipient!

Grant School District 3 is proud to announce the selection of Sonna Smith as the Grant County Crystal Apple Award winner for the 2023/2024 school year! The Grant County Crystal Apple Award is synonymous with the Teacher of the Year in Grant County.

The nominating letter included the following: "Sonna Smith's career in education spans decades, during which she has consistently exhibited unparalleled dedication, passion, and excellence in every facet of her role. Sonna's impact transcends the confines of the classroom as she has served as a beacon of guidance and inspiration for countless students through her roles as a track and cross country coach. Under her mentorship, athletes have not only achieved remarkable success on the field but have also embedded invaluable lessons in teamwork, resilience, and leadership--qualities that extend far beyond the realm of athletics and are essential for success in all facets of life. Furthermore, Sonna's unparalleled dedication to our school community is exemplified through her active involvement in a myriad of extracurricular activities and student support programs."

Superintendent Mark Witty stated, "I have known Sonna Smith for many years and had the privilege of being part of the team that hired Sonna at Grant Union! She has been--and continues to be--an amazing teacher, coach and mentor to both students and staff! Grant School District 3 is fortunate to have Sonna Smith in our district!"

Board Member Kris Beal said, "I had the privilege of working with Sonna for seven years. Sonna's teaching, student and colleague mentoring, and coaching are exemplary. I believe I would have wanted to clone Sonna if I had been the building principal during my tenure at Grant Union."

The Crystal Apple Award was presented to Sonna Smith by Grant ESD Superintendant Robert Waltenburg and Grant School District 3 Superintendant Mark Witty during a recent pep assembly at Grant Union Jr/Sr High School. Smith, who was surprised by the award, was received with resounding cheers and applause from her fellow staff and the student body. It's a great day to be a Prospector! Congratulations Sonna!

Congratulations!



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Cheers to Ms. Seebart!

Our Career Guidance Counselor, Ms. Tonia Seebart, who actually acts as a Counselor, Registrar, and Career Coordinator, has done an amazing job of preparing our students' schedules in the best way possible to ensure a smooth and accommodating start to the school year for students and staff. She has and continues to put forth extraordinary time and effort to overcome numerous challenges that she and we have faced over the past month to prepare for the 2024-25 school year.

-Justin Lieuallen, Grant Union Principal

Work Continued Over the Summer...

Thank you to the summer custodial and maintenance team. They had a long list to get done and I'm very proud of how much we were able to accomplish. Full-time custodians are Skip Ryder, Ty Baker, Jordan Walker, Kyle Erickson, and Hadley Boethin. Additional team members for the summer were Dennise Blevins, Randy Mooney, Alex Finley, Rolando Moreno, and Ernie Shorts.

-Dustin Wilson, Facilities Manager

Thank You GU Custodians!

I would like to express my utmost gratitude to Dustin Wilson and Hadley Boethin for working hard this summer to get my Math classroom ready for the year. They spent hours sanding and painting my closets and creating a professional environment for our Middle School students!

-Anna Field, Grant Union Math

Thank you Tonia Seebart!

WOW!! We are so lucky to have a returning alum back at GU as our Career Coordinator. Tonia has done an outstanding job with scheduling, counseling, and meeting the students' individual needs at Grant Union. Thank you so much for all of your hard work (long hours) and commitment to the success of our school and students.

-Shanna Northway, Special Ed Director

Ongoing Projects are a Top Priority!

Thank you to Mike Strong and Jason McCall for their hard work over this last year on our multitude of projects, including but not limited to the student commons.

-Dustin Wilson, Facilities Manager

Thank you, Sara Wilson!

The addition of Sara Wilson to the Grant Union front office has been wonderful. Her competency and hard work are appreciated. Sara asks all the right questions and strives to get the right answer in the right way. Keep up the great work supporting our staff, students, and parents.

-Andy Lusco, GU Vice-Principal/AD

Thank you, Catrina Gabbard!

Catrina Gabbard continues to go above and beyond. Her ability to support our secretarial staff in learning the duties of the job is exceptional! She is always willing to dig in and support our students, parents, staff, and the District as a whole. I greatly appreciate her positive approach and can-do attitude. Catrina is instrumental in the implementation of multiple software solutions from SchoolMessenger to our Security Software. Thank you, Catrina!!!

-Mark Witty, Superintendent

Thank you, Trista Strong!

Trista Strong has come on board as the Athletics/Attendance Secretary and is doing an amazing job. This position has a steep learning curve that is integral to the daily operations of Grant Union. We are incredibly grateful to have someone of her capability and capacity join our team. Welcome aboard and thanks, Trista.

-Andy Lusco, GU Vice-Principal/AD

Thank you, Bob Armstrong!

Bob is the number one fan of the community, schools, and students. His support and passion are infectious!

-Sherri Giffin, Humbolt Instructional Assistant

Class Scheduling has been a success!

As Grant Union has moved toward a Hybrid Model of education, involving the seamless integration of online and in-person classes, scheduling has become quite a challenge. Tonia Seebart took on scheduling this year as our incoming Career Coordinator and has worked miracles. The amount of work she has done over the past six-plus weeks has been monumental. We couldn't have done it without you Tonia. Thanks.

-Andy Lusco, GU Vice-Principal/AD



Send a shout out to staff, students or community members, in 100 words or less by sending an email to shoutout@grantesd.org.

Hank & Roxie Lissman

“Whenever they needed a volunteer, it seemed like I had volunteered without even knowing it!” Hank and Roxie Lissman, both raised in Grant County and Grant Union alumni, have been involved in the school district in just about every position possible including school board member, volunteer, chaperone, and employee.

Hank was raised in Seneca and attended Seneca Elementary through 8th grade. “It was a company town,” Hank said, as he fondly remembers walking to school, “or skating and hooky-bobbing in the street on frozen mornings.” Hank graduated 8th grade in a class of thirteen students who all began the commute to Grant Union High School. His favorite class was History and Modern Problems with Don Jones. “He was one teacher you didn’t mind going to class for,” Hank said. Hank graduated from Grant Union in 1966, moving to Treasure Valley Community College to continue his education. The following year Hank moved home to work in the woods for the Haines Lumber Company and met Roxie.

Roxie (Watson) moved to John Day in the 3rd grade, attending Humbolt Elementary and John Day Middle School before completing her education at Grant Union High School. She fondly remembers teachers Joyce Nodine, Antone Kodesh, Pat Dannon, and Reba Smith making an impact on her life. She began dating Hank during her junior year, attending school events like the Homecoming Dance and a school play in which Hank was pulled up on stage to play an impromptu part. Roxie graduated in 1970 and the two were married in June 1971.

The couple settled into life in Seneca, Hank working in the woods for the lumber company and Roxie keeping house and working for her cousins who owned Wish Poultry in Prairie City. The couple have always enjoyed being involved in the community. Hank joined the school board, representing the Izee/Seneca zone, and the couple attended all of the school events from sports to band concerts. They even “accidentally” purchased a \$75 pie at an auction and “it wasn’t even homemade,” Hank laughs. Roxie fondly remembers mowing the lawn at the City of Seneca park and baseball field with Denise Seebart. “We spent hours mowing that lawn by hand,” Roxie recalls. She then shares how Seebart wrote a letter to Fantasy, a television game show, and won a riding lawn mower! The Lissmans loved the eighteen years they spent in Seneca together.

When the Haines Lumber Company closed, Hank accepted a position with the Grant County Road Department and the couple moved to John Day. With the move of zones, Hank gave up his position on the school board but the couple found other creative ways to stay involved with the school. Hank announced football games and began keeping the books for the basketball team. Roxie accepted a janitor position at the District Office and subbed in for other janitors, before also adding a school cook position. Roxie laughs as she

remembers roping Hank into helping her clean. “We would work long into the night cleaning the buildings, only to get up early and head into work,” Roxie recalls.

Hank and Roxie became a “town home” for any of the Izee or Seneca students who needed to stay in town due to sports or other events. They fondly recall each of the students who “lived” with them during high school. “They would stay with us and they were always welcome!” Roxie shared. They taught students to drive, sent their vehicle to proms, and chaperoned many trips including anything from local trips like basketball playoffs in Pendleton to longer trips like Disneyland, Europe and Egypt. They also enjoyed supporting fundraisers. Hank laughed as he shared that he would come home from work and tell Roxie “I bought Girl Scout cookies today,” only to have her reply, “Me too! How many boxes did you buy?”

Hank retired in 2012, and Roxie joined him a few years later, retiring after 27 years with the district, 25 as cook. Retiring from their jobs, however, has not slowed down their desire to encourage the youth of Grant County! Hank and Roxie can be found sitting in the stands at just about every school event they can fit into their schedule. They have also been known to follow a few of the youth who go on to play college sports. Hank laughs as he shares about a couple of games when he was even asked to keep the books for another school. As much as Hank and Roxie enjoy the sports, however, it is the youth they are trying to encourage. “I was always interested in keeping young people interested in our area,” Hank said “and giving them something to do here.” Hank and Roxie Lissman love the youth of Grant County, so when you see them in the stands make sure you give them a wave and a hearty thank you. Better yet, go have a conversation. There is so much to learn! “One thing about living in a place forever, you know a little about the history of the area!”



Left: Hank & Roxie 1971; Right: Hank & Roxie congratulate 2024 graduate Halle Parsons after a volleyball game.

The Strategic Plan in Action

By Shanna Northway, Special Programs Director

Our school district is thrilled to embark on the journey of realizing the goals outlined in our strategic plan. The collaborative process that led to the creation of this plan was truly extraordinary, bringing together insights from staff, students, community members, board members, and administrators. The planning team took great care to listen to and incorporate input at every stage, ensuring that our plan reflects the collective vision of our entire community.

One of the most remarkable aspects of our strategic planning process was the level of involvement from every staff member across the district. We understood from the beginning that for the plan to be truly effective, it needed to reflect the voices and expertise of those who are on the front lines of education every day. To achieve this we made sure that every staff member had a chance to contribute their thoughts, ideas, and feedback. This was done through various means including surveys, focus groups, and participation in planning and goal-setting teams. This inclusive approach ensured that the plan is not just a top-down directive but a collective vision that every staff member can stand behind.

This widespread involvement has fostered a deep sense of ownership among our staff. When every individual feels that their voice has been heard and their input has shaped the direction of the district, there is a powerful collective commitment to seeing the plan through. This buy-in is crucial because it means that our staff isn’t just following a set of guidelines; they’re actively living the values and goals of the strategic plan in their daily work. Whether in the classroom, the office, or in support roles, our staff members are united in their dedication to making sure that every student is known, supported, and empowered to succeed.

A central theme you’ll find throughout the plan is the commitment to ensuring that EVERY Prospector

is known. This means that each student, staff member, and community member has a place, a voice, and a vital role in our district. We are dedicated to building a district where students feel supported, empowered, and ready to achieve their fullest potential. I was personally impressed with how the planning process was facilitated, allowing a diverse group of stakeholders to have an equal voice in crafting a plan that truly embodies the core values of our community.

As we move forward, we are focused on embedding the strategic plan into our daily work, ensuring it’s not just “one more thing to do” but a living document that guides our actions. The strategic plan also serves as a common language for us all, providing a clear and shared framework for our efforts. With everyone working from the same blueprint, we’re able to maximize our impact and keep the entire district focused on moving in a common direction.

One way the district is keeping these goals involved in our planning is through the formation of a Strategic Engagement Group which includes the Superintendent, administrators, and teachers from both the elementary and secondary level. This team of 11 staff members are meeting monthly to assess the accomplishments of our goals, update the school board regularly, and keep the district on track.

Our commitment to individualized education means that every student will have a personalized success plan, tracking their journey from kindergarten through graduation. This year, we’re also prioritizing staff training around assessment, relationship building, and executive functioning to better support our students' development. Additionally, we’re enhancing community and student engagement and upgrading our facilities to create safe, welcoming spaces for everyone. We’re excited to see the positive impact of this plan on our district as we work together to make our shared vision a reality.



Grant Union Remodels Courtyard and Student Commons



Students have fun hanging out around the courtyard and new student commons, playing games and socializing on their personal times, and completing online coursework or groupwork during school hours. Thank you Grant School District 3 for these fun student areas!

RC Huerta as Humbolt Dean of Students

There is a new face in the office at Humbolt Elementary School. Mr. RC Huerta has moved from his 6th grade classroom to the role of Dean of Students. A Dean of Students is considered a Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) position and is responsible for a variety of tasks related to student life, student services, and on-campus activities.

Huerta is “excited to take on this new role in building relationships with all the students, staff members, and parents/guardians. I love the fact that I can offer support to Janine and the school counselors and I really enjoy being able to help out in all areas.” According to principal Janine Attlesperger, “He brings a unique perspective to behavior management,” listing his years of experience coaching students and his ability to build relationships with students both inside and outside of school. “He can relate to the students on a different level.”

So far this year, Huerta has been spending a lot of his time on the playground, getting to know the students and instructing students on school rules, cooperation, and problem solving. “Students learn independence, teamwork, and problem solving in the classroom,” Attlesperger explained, “but they get to put those skills into practice at recess.”

Huerta is also able to support teachers with behavior management issues when one student or a small group of students needs to be met with but the teacher is busy teaching the rest of their class. He can invest the time to meet with students and help them problem solve or gather information regarding any problems that may be occurring. He then meets with Attlesperger regarding behavior management and how the student may be taught to self-regulate or avoid certain situations. They are also working together to find solutions of restorative justice, or asking students to make amends for their behavior, rather than punishments such as missing recess. “Recess is a really important part of their day,” said Attlesperger,

“if they miss recess because of their behaviors, they aren’t getting that time to practice what they have learned.” Another approach to helping students who may have a difficult time self-regulating is the addition of the refocus room, which can help a student transition from recess or large group interaction time to being better prepared for a serious learning environment.

The addition of the Dean of Students position has been instrumental in clearing the schedules of Attlesperger and the school counselors to work on other aspects of their positions while still being involved in behavior management, including their weekly visits to Seneca Elementary. Huerta is working hard to stay involved with the students on a daily basis, meeting with students to create and follow through with their behavior management plans, and working on his own education. Attlesperger shared the importance of educators continuing their own education, pointing out her pursuit of her Doctorate degree and many other staff and teachers working on their degrees of various levels. “My experience so far has been great and I look forward to continuing to build relationships and taking on any task that comes my way,” said Huerta. “I’m grateful for all the support I have received from Janine, the school counselors and staff, as well as the community, and the administrators across the district. It’s been a fun, new experience!” The 2024-25 school year is underway and the students of Humbolt Elementary are excited to welcome Mr. Huerta. Go Little Pros!



New Playground at Humbolt Elementary



The new playground is complete and our students are so excited! They have had a great time trying out all the equipment, which includes a large play structure, a wheelchair-accessible merry-go-round, a xylophone, a teeter-totter, a beautiful pour-in-play surface, and a ninja course! Thank you to everyone who has worked on the playground or helped make it possible!

Attendance Matters

There's a strong connection between good attendance and success in school. On the other hand, students who regularly miss school are also more likely to struggle in school. Missed days add up quickly. Missing just two days a month puts a child's success in jeopardy because students fall behind and disconnect. By third grade, it gets much more difficult to catch up. Students who regularly miss school can quickly feel hopeless and returning becomes more and more difficult.

In addition, missing two days a month each year, beginning in kindergarten, is the equivalent of missing an entire year of school by the 12th grade. We are concerned about how this might impact students after graduation, whether they choose to pursue jobs, college, or other paths.

The reasons for chronic absenteeism vary, but we want to help. Troubleshooting issues that are keeping a student away from school can make a difference immediately and in the long term. Students with solid attendance are much more likely to be successful during school and after graduation.

Getting into the habit of daily attendance is important. Daily attendance helps to:

- reduce stress
- make it easier to connect with friends and teachers
- support learning

We are striving to make our school environment a place where everyone feels safe, healthy, and focused on learning. Regular attendance means being here at least 90% of the time, or missing no more than 15 days in a school year. We will do our best to listen and partner with you so that all students have a successful year.

District Efforts

We are working to improve attendance through a combination of efforts. These include improving data collection, identifying and addressing barriers for students, caregivers, and families, and creating a school culture where all students are positively connected to our school.

Community-Based Solutions

Many issues contribute to chronic absenteeism, and we are looking to our community and families for help as solutions for each child are developed. These might include easier fixes such as carpooling, or more difficult challenges such as helping connect families with supportive resources.

Please call us if you need help with attendance:

- Grant Union Jr/Sr High School, 541-575-1799
- Humbolt Elementary School, 541-575-0454
- Seneca Elementary School, 541-542-2542

New Seneca Staff and STEM Focus

Seneca Elementary students were greeted by two new teachers this year. Carrie Sullivan transferred from Humbolt Elementary to teach 3rd-6th grade students. Sullivan grew up in Alaska, living a subsistence lifestyle, then traveled to Brazil for a yearlong exchange. She went to school at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and double majored in English Literature and Editorial Journalism, with a minor in French. After deciding to teach, Sullivan returned to school and obtained her Master's Degree in the Art of Teaching from Pacific University in Oregon. She lives in Dayville and has taught in Grant County for the past 13 years. In 2022 she was awarded Regional Teacher of the Year for the Grant County ESD. She participates with Eastern Oregon Regional Education Network and has created a series of professional development videos for the Micro Videos Team. She is also a Science Technology Engineering (Art) and Math, or STE(A)M, Leader with GO STEM!

As the new head teacher at Seneca Elementary, Sullivan hopes to inspire students to engage with lessons and learn to think critically while developing an understanding of their own unique gifts and talents as well as an appreciation of our amazing geographical and cultural location. She aspires to encourage the development of an inclusive classroom culture that fosters student engagement, individual growth, and civic caring. In addition to teaching, Sullivan works with her family on

the ranch and in her free time enjoys painting, hiking, cooking, sewing, reading, and horseback riding.

Sullivan is joined by Stacy Durych who will be teaching the Kindergarten-2nd grade students. Durych was born in Minnesota and moved to Alaska at 15. She graduated from the University of Alaska Anchorage with a Bachelor of Administration in Accounting, later pursuing her passion for education by taking master's classes, specializing in Waldorf Education. She moved to John Day four years ago, where she taught Career Tech Education, Business, and Computers at the high school level and served as the FBLA advisor. “I am beyond excited to now be a K-2 teacher at Seneca Elementary School and look forward to a wonderful year with your children.” Durych enjoys reading, cooking, baking, and entertaining friends and family. She also enjoys spending time in nature whether with her family at their fish camp in Soldotna, Alaska, or riding her fat tire bike.

District Elementary Principal Janine Attlesperger is excited to see “the new STEM lessons embrace the uniqueness of Seneca.” Students of Seneca Elementary have been enjoying bread baking and nature walks as well as learning about horses and yodeling. “The community of Seneca has been genuine and friendly,” Sullivan said. “By partnering with the community, we can create engaging experiences that are part of the long tradition and expectations of Seneca Elementary School”

Grant Union Welcomes Mr. Lieuallen

With a new school year come many new faces around the district. Grant Union Jr/Sr High School is excited to welcome Mr. Justin Lieuallen to the position of Principal.

Mr. Lieuallen has many fond memories of his own school days and understands the unique calling of living in a rural area. Growing up on a wheat farm and cattle ranch outside of Weston, Lieuallen remembers riding the bus to and from school. He was active in high school sports and excelled at wrestling, winning district champion four years in a row. He graduated from McLoughlin High School in Milton-Freewater and headed to Central Oregon Community College for his Associates Degree. He then continued his education at Pacific University where he graduated with his Bachelor of Science in addition to being All-American wrestler and Male Athlete of the Year.

His teaching and coaching career began during his time at Pacific when he became an Instructional Assistant and Assistant Wrestling Coach at Glencoe

High School. After graduation, Lieuallen taught science and was Head Wrestling Coach at Westview High School in Beaverton, Oregon. He completed his Administration License through Lewis & Clark College and served as Assistant Principal at McNary High School in Salem, Oregon, Principal at Silverton High School, and then Coordinator/Director at the Willamette Education Service District. During his time at the Willamette ESD, Lieuallen filled many roles including stepping in as an interim principal and assisting with the design and creation of the Willamette Career Academy, providing hands-on career training for students from Marion, Polk, and Yamhill Counties.

Lieuallen is very excited to be returning to his roots in rural Eastern Oregon and looks forward to introducing his wife Debbie, son Schein (Senior), son Weston (Junior), and daughter Leah (Freshman) to the area and Grant Union Jr/Sr High School. The 2024-25 school year is off and running, and Mr. Lieuallen is proud to be a part of the excitement! Go Prospectors!



Grant Union Jr/Sr High School's Kailee Oliver, Anna Field, Principal Justin Lieuallen, Drew Lusco, Cindy Dougharity-Spencer, Tonia Seebart, Marissa Smith and Sonna Smith attended AVID Summer Institute 2024.

Student Access to Friday School

While Grant School District 3's 2024-25 school calendar remains a four-day week, with students attending class Monday through Thursday, one significant change this year is the addition of a Friday school format. Nineteen additional workdays have been added to teacher contracts after a survey of staff, parents, and students communicated the need for additional student-teacher time.

At Grant Union Jr/Sr High School, these Friday school days are optional for students who will be welcome on campus from 9 a.m. to noon. Attending school on Friday will allow students to catch up on any missing assignments and get extra help or tutoring in their classes. The closed-campus afternoons will give staff opportunities for meetings, in-service training, and extra preparation time for the following week.

At the elementary level, teachers will have additional time for meetings, in-service training, and class preparation time. This Friday format may also be used to help elementary students who need extra time or assistance by invitation only. Teacher can use this time for club meetings at all levels. Last year, students at Humbolt Elementary enjoyed access to a Spanish Club, Battle of the Books, Math Club, and Crochet Club; while clubs at Grant Union included Homework Club, FBLA, FFA, Travel Club, and Video Game Club.

School transportation is currently not available for Fridays but lunch will be available at the student's expense and must be signed up for in advance. If you have any questions, please contact Grant School District 3 or your local school office.

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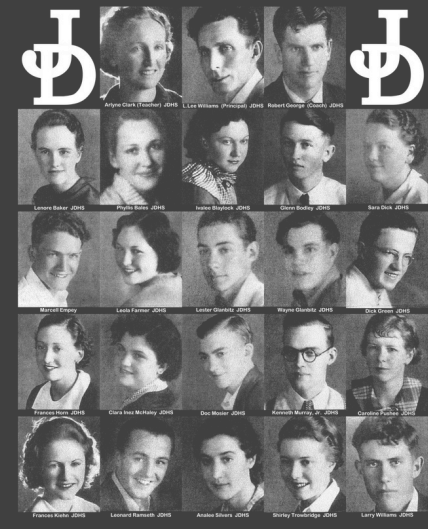
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John Day High School Class of 1936



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travel expenses.*

Family Membership (\$50)

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(The above poster showcasing the class of 1936 was donated by Jerry & Shirley Harrison and is currently on display at Grant Union Jr/Sr High School) Photos include: Arlyne Clark (Teacher), L. Lee Williams (Principal), Robert George (Coach), Lenore Baker, Phyllis Bales, Ivalee Blaylock, Glenn Bodley, Sare Dick, Marcell Empey, Leola Farmer, Lester Glanbitz, Wayne Glanbitz, Dick Green, Frances Horn, Clara Inez McHaley, Doc Mosier, Kenneth Murray, Jr., Frances Kiehn, Leonard Ramseth, Analee Silvers, Shirley Trowbridge, and Larry Williams.