

LOCAL
POSTAL CUSTOMER

Senior Project Creates Buddy System

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The elementary students are having a blast. “Kinders are asking about the seniors regularly and are excited each time they see them,” said Mrs. Raschio. “Whether that’s at a sporting event, a music performance, in the classroom, or in a store, each one feels special.” The seniors are also having a wonderful time with the process. Many of the seniors called the process fun and were excited to share their favorite memories so far, from painting handprint turkeys to making ornaments and taking pictures with their buddies.

As we head into the new year, Raschio has planned several more monthly get-togethers for the buddies. The students will stay busy with learning to write pen-pal letters in February, reading for Read Across America Day in March, the Humbolt Fun Run in April, and Spring planting in May. The Senior class will then complete their graduation walk through the Humbolt campus before graduation. Raschio hopes they will inspire the kindergarteners to pursue their own

graduation goals, but he also hopes the senior class will recognize everyone who has supported them along the way and give back through helping younger students.

Mrs. Raschio added, “I am confident the students are not going to shy away from their senior this spring, but walk proudly with them through the traditional Humbolt walk. I want to thank all the seniors for taking the time to make a kindergartener feel like they are a part of the greater GU family. Thank you for helping me get projects completed. I wouldn’t have done them without your help. And finally, thank you for joining in our kindergarten fun!”

This project has been an adventure for each of the 27 seniors and 20 kindergarten students participating. Vincent Raschio’s advisor Andrea Combs is also supportive of the project. “I love this concept,” Combs said, “and this is a senior project that I hope we continue in future years. There is a lot of value in connecting seniors with our kindergarteners throughout the year.”



PROSPECTOR PRIDE



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Senior Project Creates Buddy System

A senior project is one of the final requirements for a Grant Union student pursuing an Honors Diploma. Vincent Raschio has been working on his senior project all year, working to connect the senior class with the kindergarten class in a buddy system.

The idea took root over the past couple years as he watched the senior class complete their graduation walk through the Humbolt Elementary campus. This end of year tradition has been a highlight for the elementary students and a moment of recognition and gratitude for the teachers who have given so much time and attention to help these graduates succeed. Several years ago, kindergarten teacher Sena Raschio began pairing her graduating kindergarten class up with the high school seniors for the traditional walk, giving a visual representation of just how far (and how quickly) these students have successfully navigated the past twelve years of their education. When Vincent saw the rambunctious kindergarten students he knew and loved from his mother’s class turn into shy, quiet kids because they didn’t know the senior they were walking with, he wanted to change that. He created a plan, a schedule of events, and received approval for his senior project.

In September, Raschio led 27 of his classmates on a walk to Humbolt Elementary and introduced them to a buddy from the kindergarten class. The students met in the gym, presenting their buddies with gifts of cookies and Grant Union hats with both graduation years 2026 and 2038 on the back. A few of the seniors requested buddies they already knew, like Mathew Delano who

was paired with his nephew. Many of the students were introduced to a partner they had never met before. “My buddy was shy at first,” said senior Maddie Underwood. Her friend Emma Northway joined in, “Yeah, but then the more time we spent with them the more they opened up.”



In November, the seniors walked over to Humbolt to help the students with their art class. They each paired off with their buddies, helping them create turkeys out of a painted handprint. “I never could have done a project like that without their help,” said teacher Sena Raschio. When the class completed their turkeys, many of the kindergarteners helped their senior buddies paint their own handprints! The students returned again in December to help the students create ornaments as gifts for their families.

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Color Me Crazy Ceramics
So much fun at Color Me Crazy Ceramics! Our 3rd graders loved creating holiday masterpieces. Thank you for hosting us!
-Kristal Hansen & Robin Miller, Humbolt 3rd Grade



Congratulations Humbolt Ambassadors!
We want to give a big shout-out to our December & January Humbolt Student Ambassadors! Thank you for being leaders, role models, and positive representatives of our school. The December Ambassadors were Dylan Moles, Azalea Gabbard, Hank Giffin, Hannah Bernstein, Caliann Cheser, and Kalem Davis. January Ambassadors included Temperance Daylong, Amia Gibson, Whitley Suchorski, Emma Charette, Shane Hancock, and Wesley Hunt.
-Charissa Moulton, Humbolt Dean of Students

Timber Truckers Light Parade
I would like to give a shout-out to Kevin Fairless, Sharon Flory, and LeAnn Coalwell for their hard work on the bus in the light parade. The bus looked really great.
-Gary VanderStelt, Transportation Manager



The Polar Express arrived at Grant School District 3, winning first place in the community category of the 2025 Timber Truckers Light Parade.

Seneca Honors Raney Anderson
Thank you, Raney Anderson, for your outstanding dedication and service. Superintendent Mark Witty and Principal Janine Attlesperger recently presented a letter of recognition to Ms. Anderson for her commitment to our students and her willingness to adjust her own educational path to continue teaching here part-time. Our students love her, our staff value her deeply, and our school is stronger because of her presence. Congratulations, Ms. Anderson! This recognition is well deserved, and we are proud to work alongside you!
-Stacy Durych, Seneca Elementary Head Teacher

GU Recognizes Students of the Month
Congratulations to the October Students of the Month for demonstrating responsibility: Paislee Smith, Timber Morton, Colton Lindsay, Jhett Williams, Gracee Hueckman, and Hannah Cole. Our November Students of the Month were chosen for recognizing opportunity: Gabe Blevins, Chloe Hardiman, Rhynna Wyllie, Adie Judd, Jerret Waddel, and Lily Durych. The December Students of the Month have gone above and beyond expectation with their participation: Shayann Gosnell, Amaris Paddock, Skylrr McQuown, Ukiah Snapp, Aiden Walker, and Taylor Gosnell. These students have been recognized by their teachers for excellence!
-Grant Union Staff

Students Experience a Day on the Ranch
Thank you, MT & Cori Anderson, for hosting the students of Seneca Elementary! Students learned the process of weighing, tattooing, tagging and giving probiotics to newborn Hereford calves. They also learned horses and cattle are fed differently to meet their nutrient requirements. Some even participated in the feeding process! We saw baby calves, horses, dogs, and lots of cows! After feeding and before heading back to school we had a nice lunch made by Cori. We are grateful to have community members that open their places up for learning, and support our small school.
-Stacy Durych, Seneca Elementary Head Teacher



Send a shout out to staff, students or community members, by sending an email to shoutout@johndaysd.org.

Alumni Focus: Gordon Beil

If you haven't had the chance to meet Gordon and Betty Beil, I would love to introduce you to them. Gordon, son of Jerry Beil and Yvonne Saunders, grew up in Seneca, Oregon, where he attended Seneca Elementary School through the eighth grade. Seneca was a lumber town with a larger population and its own money system. He remembers the town before street lights, with all the neighborhood kids running around after dark, and before the movie theater, motel, bar, post office, and store burned. His step-father owned the store, collecting a few guns and old silver dollars from the 1800s, which were lost in the fire. Gordon played flag football and basketball for Seneca Elementary. He laughs as he recalls, "playing against the John Day kids in their full pads and uniforms."

The routine changed his freshman year when his small class of six headed to Grant Union High School and began commuting by bus to John Day. He laughed as he recalled kids sneaking over to unplug the bus if they wanted an extra snow day. He stayed busy with football, basketball, and track, often arriving home after 7:00 pm. "The bus driver always made sure we made it home safely," he said, mentioning the bus driver would run them to Seneca in the Driver's Ed van with the second brake pedal. "One night that pedal had to be used when a deer ran out into the road, and we always made sure someone sat in the front seat after that."

Gordon shared many of his fond memories from high school, including participating in the Mr. GUHS Contest his freshman year, when the boys wore dresses and competed in a beauty contest. His friends called him Beatle ("and still do!" adds Betty), because he wore his hair the same as the members of the musical group The Beatles. Beil had many influences in his life, but his favorites were his coaches, Ralph Burton and Don Jones, who were both Social Studies teachers, and Eugene Winnett, an English teacher.

Beil left for Mount Hood Community College after graduation in 1972 with the desire to teach. After one year of classes, he decided teaching just wouldn't be for him, and he returned home to John Day to work in the

Hudspeth sawmill. He married, and his son Christopher was born.

In 1988, he married Betty, who had two sons of her own, Patrick Gibson and George Gibson. Betty worked for Grant School District 3 as a bus driver and substitute custodian at Blue Mountain Junior High, eventually becoming a full-time custodian at Grant Union High School. When work in the sawmills slowed down, Gordon accepted the custodian job at the Mount Vernon Middle School, moving to Humbolt Elementary School after the middle school closed.

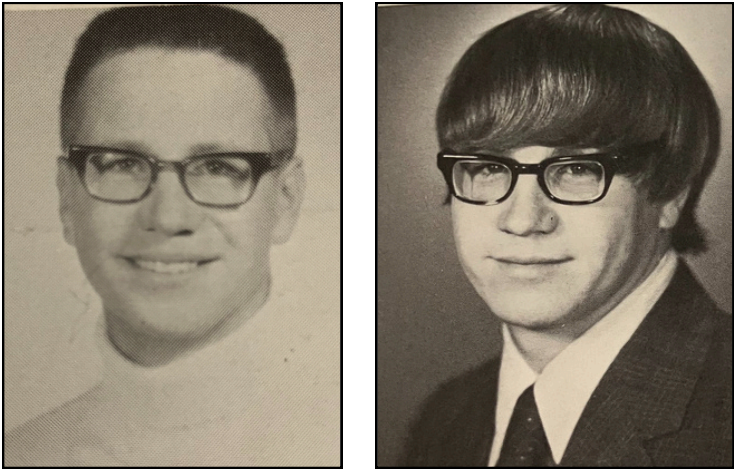
In addition to their three sons, Gordon and Betty were blessed with five grandchildren: Rae Gibson, Ryland Beil, Landon Beil, Teagan Gibson, and Gunner Gibson. Gordon retired from Grant School District 3 in 2020, at the age of 67, but continued officiating at games simply because he loved sports and the students. In 2022, he retired from that, as well, having completed 22 years of basketball, 25 years of baseball and softball, and 11 years of volleyball. Retirement has not slowed life down for Gordon and Betty, who can still be found in the stands, cheering on their grandkids and the entire student body of Grant School District 3. Once a Prospector, always a Prospector!



Beil at a basketball game and with his dog



Gordon and Betty Beil



Gordon Beil as a freshman (left) and senior (right).

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Grant Union Offers Flexibility in Schedules

Grant Union Jr/Sr High School strives to be “A place where every Prospector is known, empowered, and ready for the world.” One area helping to fulfill this vision statement is the flexibility built into student schedules. While every student is required to complete the Oregon state-mandated graduation requirements, many students reach their Junior and Senior years to discover they only have a few required classes remaining. In order to remain sports-eligible, students are required to be enrolled in 2.5 credits, which equals 5 classes per semester. This gives them some choices of how to spend their time.

There are several options for students at this point in their education, and Tonia Seebart, Grant Union’s Career Coordinator, enjoys helping students take control of their own education goals. A few of the options chosen by upper classmen are taking additional classes, becoming a teaching assistant, or heading to work through the work study program.

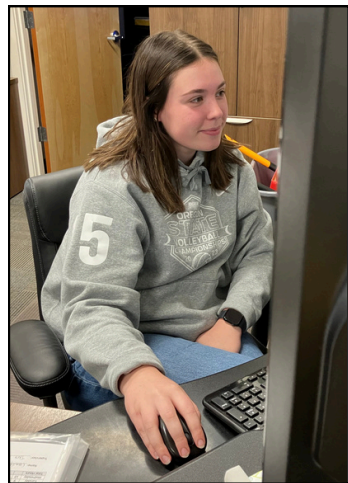
Students who choose to spend their time taking additional classes may be filling in gaps in their requirements through in-person or online high school credits, or they may be enrolled in a college level course through Eastern Oregon University or Blue Mountain Community College. Students enrolled in online classes have access to teacher advisors and may work on their classes at home, in the online classroom, or in the student commons.

A popular choice with Juniors and Seniors for an elective credit is to be a TA (teaching assistant) for a favorite teacher. At this time, seven students TA for teachers at Humbolt Elementary, seven students TA for teachers at Grant Union Jr/Sr High School, and five students are currently working in the Grant Union office. Seebart stated, “I never thought I needed an assistant until I had one!” Students planning to pursue a teaching career may also be interested in enrolling in Eastern Oregon University’s Future Educator classes, earning valuable college credits for their involvement in the classroom.

Whether preparing for college or the work force, another option for students is the work study program. While the school strives to provide every student opportunities to plan for future education and career goals, a work study position can help students gain hands-on work experience. Seebart can help students who already have a job and would like to use school hours to go to work or students who are looking for a position by connecting the student with a local employer. The work study program is a community partnership between the student, the parent, the employer, and the school. The program helps students:

- apply their academic knowledge in a real-world setting,
- gain insight into achievable goals and interests,
- develop positive work ethics, and
- gain confidence in their own abilities.

Senior Emmalynn Northway works at the Grant County Education Service District, or ESD, gaining experience in office work and customer service. Although she someday envisions herself entering a medical field rather than education, she loves the people she is working with and has found the experience valuable. “It shows you what to expect, like time management and responsibility.” Her supervisors, Deputy Clerk Emma Winkelman and Accounting Specialist Tara Young have appreciated her work. “It’s a really great introduction to what a real job will be like after high school,” Winkelman stated, “how to have a boss and learning something new.” Northway completes sorting, scanning, filing, answering phones, and other small office projects. She finds the accounts payable and purchase orders interesting and shares, “you have to be super organized and there is an exact way to do it.” She looks forward to the privilege of helping with budgets in the Spring. Northway shared the job has helped her gain social skills and computer experience, as well as confidence in the workplace. Her favorite part of the job? Definitely the people she works with! “Everyone includes me, even though I’m only here for an hour. They make a point to stop and say hi!”



Senior Taylor Palmateer is pursuing a future career in cosmetology, but currently works one hour each morning at the Grant County Fairgrounds before heading to school for the day. She is gaining valuable office experience “just showing up,” pointing out the necessity for students to learn the value of scheduling their days and being punctual with their commitments. “There are basic life skills you need to learn,” said Palmateer. She spends the majority of her time filing and sorting paperwork, completing computer forms, and designing posters and flyers advertising upcoming events, with every day looking a little different depending on what might be going on around the fairgrounds. “We can always use help around the fairgrounds,” Grant County Fairgrounds and RV Park Manager Mindy Winegar points out how important it is for students to learn what types of jobs are available within our own community. “We need to show the next

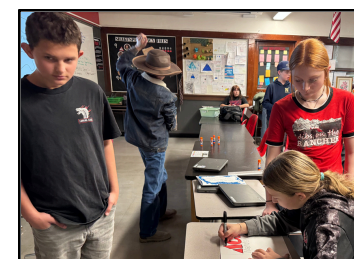


generation we have good careers right here in Grant County. It’s a good job. It’s a county job.” Winegar adds, “I think every business should take advantage of the program. It benefits the students, the school, and the businesses.”

As a special education teacher, Andrea Combs uses the work study program to connect her students with valuable work skills and life experience. Two students are currently working every school day, one at the Humbolt Childcare Center and another at Pioneer Feed Farm and Country Store. Ari Montwheeler works three days a week at the John Day Senior Center. Montwheeler and classmate Rayne Thomas are also gaining paid work experience in the Grant Union Jr/Sr High School cafeteria, washing trays and dishes after



Left: Ari Montwheeler at the John Day Senior Center, Center: Tate Waddel at Pioneer Feed, Right: Ari Montwheeler and Rayne Thomas in the Grant Union Jr/Sr High School cafeteria.

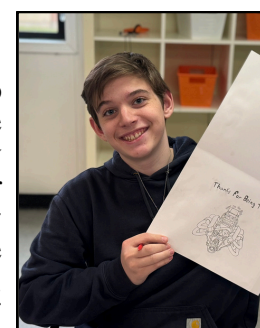


Students Thank Local Businesses

Students at Grant Union Jr/Sr High School have been searching for ways to express their gratefulness to local businesses and community partners. The students recently delivered mugs and handwritten thank you notes to many local businesses, and they recorded a video communicating their appreciation for the sponsorship of athletic events and clubs, job shadow and internship opportunities, and all of the other amazing ways the community continues to support the students of Grant School District 3. “Continued support from our community allows us to have a wide range of

opportunities,” said sophomore Morgan Cole. “Our community is more than just a place on a map, it’s a group of people who believe in our students, invest in their futures, and remind them everyday that they are valued.”

This video can be found on the Grant Union Facebook page, at the Grant Union website at <https://guhs.grantschooldistrict.org/the-mining-report>, or by following the QR code.



SCHOOL COUNSELOR APPRECIATION WEEK! FEBRUARY 2-6, 2026



Stephanie Riis
Behavioral Interventionist
Grant Union Jr/Sr High School



Marci Judd
School Counselor
Humbolt Elementary School



Jennifer Reyes
School Counselor
Humbolt & Seneca Elementary



Where Are They Now?

A Prospector Reunion!



Grant Union Class of 2005 Reunion included Kaylee, Jill, Sylvia, Kristal, Rory, Crystal, Faith, JT, and Nathan.

Family Tradition: A New Generation of Prospectors!



Andrew Copenhaver, GU Class of 2016, and Melissa (Hale) Copenhaver, GU Class of 2009, with their sons Kayleb, Tye, Mason, and Matthew.

Where are you now? We would love to hear from all of our alumni! Reach out to us by e-mail at shoutout@grantesd.org or call the district office at 541-575-1280.

Seneca Elementary



Humbolt Elementary



Grant Union Jr/Sr High School

