

COMMUNITY

Banks, schools form partnership

By Meg Dedolph
Emerald Reporter

It used to be that the only bank grade-schoolers knew about was shaped like a pig and broke if you dropped it. Today, schools in Lane County have an opportunity to study a different kind of banking through a business/school partnership program with First Interstate Bank.

Through this six-year-old program, each area bank branch is paired with a different school, including elementary and high schools.

Usually, a bank selects a school in its neighborhood that it may have a contact with, but if a school were to approach a bank and suggest a partnership, First Interstate Area Sales Manager John Getz said the bank would be equally receptive.

"I'd be safe to say every one of our Lane County branches is involved with schools," Getz said.

The partnerships "help the schools to understand us and us to understand the schools," Getz said.

Linda Forbes, principal of Goshen Elementary School, agreed.

"It's real important to keep people in the business community aware of what's going on in schools," said Forbes, whose school is paired with the First Interstate University branch.

The partnership between the University branch and Goshen Elementary is a fairly new one, said Gabrielle Molinari, the branch service manager.

Displays of Goshen students' work are on view at the bank, and bank employees have visited the school.

Forbes said this year is "getting off to a slow start," and one of her goals is to be "more consistent about our communication with the bank."

Forbes said the bank already receives the school newsletter, but she would like to invite the bank to more school events.

"We have a new PTA this year, and we would like to see how First Interstate can support the goals of the school and the PTA," she said.

Last year, the bank donated \$100 to the school toward the purchase of a bookbinding machine so students could write books and have them "published."

The bank also helped the school with fund-raising projects by selling candy bars in the lobby, volunteering chaperones for field trips, and offering to send employees to the school to discuss money management with student and parent groups.

Caroline Herman, a banker at the University branch, said the bank offered to send volunteers to read in classrooms and found an Australian among the bank's customers who could speak to classes in connection with a unit on Australia.

Since the program began, Lane County First Interstate branches have loaned equipment to schools, like tables and chairs, and donated space for meetings. Banks have provided employees for students to interview in conjunction with school assignments.

The Coburg Road branch, which has a four-year-old partnership with Washington Elementary School, hopes to assist

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First Interstate Area Sales
Manager

the school with a unit on the Oregon Trail, said Judy Matheny, the bank's branch service manager.

Jeff Faust, Washington School's principal, said that in February, the entire school will begin studying the Oregon Trail through a unit called "Pioneer Living Experience," in which it

would like to involve the bank. The school plans to set up booths at which students can learn about different aspects of traveling the Oregon Trail. Matheny said the bank hopes to have a booth about banking during the late 1800s.

Matheny also said the bank is planning to offer tours to Washington School students.

"With First Interstate, we provide some artwork for them to display, and for a while, we had a Student of the Month, where they would display that, too," Faust said.

The Coburg Road branch and Washington School sponsored a Tree of Joy, where bank employees, customers, students and their families could select gifts for lower-income Washington School students.

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