



**"Pumping Iron"
#34
with Bob Quinn**

"Pumping iron" may be good for your general health and well-being, but not if you're pumping iron from your water source or from your well's piping system.

Iron in your water supply will cause problems in the appearance of laundered items, with rust spots or a yellow or pink cast to clothing. Nylon items are more susceptible to discoloration. The use of a chlorine bleach only makes the problem more acute. But iron also causes discoloration of sinks, tubs, fixtures and appliances. Bad enough, but iron can also give an unpleasant metallic taste to drinking water, or an off taste to coffee and tea. Finally, as we saw in an earlier column, it can clog your well system. Before you can arrive at an effective solution, you'll need to determine whether the source of the iron is dissolved iron from your well, iron from your pipes, or iron bacteria (This is an increasing problem in Josephine County). The right solution will also depend on the pH level of your water. If you're pumping iron and don't want to, give us a call for some helpful tips that might lift the weight from your shoulders...

Bob Quinn is a member of the Oregon Ground Water Association and owner of Quinn's Well and Pump Service at 6811 Williams Hwy., Grants Pass. As part of a tradition of information and service that began more than 50 years ago, these columns are provided by the firm to help take the mystery out of well drilling and ground water. If you have a question about your well or one you are planning, please call Bob or his helpful staff for advice, estimates, or helpful information at no obligation or cost.

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Ruch School: A true community school

BY MARGARET PERROW DELLA SANTINA

These are uncertain and challenging times for public education. Like school districts across the state, the Medford School District is feeling the effects of funding cuts and budget shortfalls. This year Ruch School has experienced larger class sizes, the elimination of parent-teacher conferences, and fewer school days in the calendar year among other things. In many cases, our teachers are required to implement brand new math and reading curricula while teaching larger (or split grade-level) classes, with less professional development and support.

On the other hand, it's important to remember and appreciate what we do have, what makes Ruch School unique and resilient, what makes it a good place for kids to grow. Recent educational research points to the effectiveness of K-8 schools for students in the middle grades (over their middle-school counterparts), and the potential of small schools to foster a supportive, mutually accountable learning environment where every student is known personally. We are fortunate to have these two elements—a school that accommodates grades K-8, and is small enough for every student to feel personally known. But there is a third critical factor that we also have, and must continue to recognize and encourage: community support and involvement.

Ruch School has a history of community involvement dating back to 1914. The placard hanging under the original school bell, at the entrance, commemorates its origins grounded solidly in community: "The Ruch School was built in 1914 as a cooperative project by the members of the community who poured each block, with all materials and labor donated."

More than 100 years later, in 2004 the community carried on the tradition of supporting the school, in response to a district proposal to close it altogether: declining enrollment meant that the school was no longer cost-effective to the district. A school board hearing held in the school gym drew an overflow crowd of community members, many of whom testified to the importance of keeping the school operating. Perhaps you were there, and perhaps you remember that some of these testimonials were from people who reminisced fondly about their own days as children at the school; many, many people passionately told the board how important the school is, and why they considered it to be a "hub" of the community. As a teacher-educator, an educational researcher and a new mother in 2004, I was relieved and inspired. The school's continued existence today is a tribute in part to the strength of this outpouring of community support.

Community and staff worked

hard together for many months to find solutions, resulting in a substantial restructuring: The schedule was changed to a more cost-effective four-day school week (Monday is not a school day), with more instructional minutes built into those four days (an earlier starting bell, and a later end to the school day), and no early release days. The addition of seventh and eighth grades was another significant change.

Perhaps the most exciting and innovative development in the years immediately following 2004 was the intensification of the school's long tradition of community involvement. Community members were invited to volunteer to instruct elective classes for the seventh- and eighth-graders and participate in the after-school enrichment program for all grades, sharing their areas of expertise. And the community responded: in 2005-06, volunteer-led elective and enrichment classes included chess, first aid, drama, cooking, creative writing, babysitter training, and a variety of music, art and science classes. As the program took hold and the community took interest, new electives and after-school enrichment classes were offered in subsequent years: watercolors, robotics, mime, yoga, money-management, stage combat,

conga drumming, sewing, drawing, green house gardening, mosaics, flower-arranging,

keyboarding, knitting, didgeridoo, wood shop, Spanish, and juggling are among the many classes that have been available to Ruch students in the past few years. In addition, the school has consistently had a strong sports program staffed largely by volunteers: cross-country, volleyball, basketball, and track are all popular. (Students of all ages are encouraged to participate in running even if they don't compete in track meets.) This fall, middle school students were able to choose from Lego robotics, computer programming, photography, and a variety of art electives taught by community volunteers—in addition to district-funded electives in Mandarin Chinese, band, orchestra, and vocal music. Middle school teachers also volunteer their time to teach electives like drama, calligraphy, community service, engineering, and additional science and math topics.

What wonderful testimony to the generosity, dedication, and expertise of our friends and neighbors! In an era when every dollar in public education seems to be over-allocated; when arts, music and PE have been marginalized; and when every instructional minute seems to be devoted



Electives and after-school enrichment activities have included flower-arranging, dissecting a squid, and papier-mâché.

to heavily "tested" subject areas... clearly, this community has a wealth of talents and skills that can play an important role in sustaining after-school enrichment programs.

Ruch School principal Julie Hill talks with pride about the "extraordinary level" of parent and community involvement at the school. She's right: the rack of volunteer name tags is crammed full; the logbook reflects numerous daily parent volunteers on campus. And any school would envy the past roster of community-led enrichment and elective classes. Like all public schools, Ruch School faces uncertainties and challenges in years ahead; however, what sets it apart is its long tradition of community involvement. We are fortunate to have so many neighbors with extraordinary, diverse talents and skills—people who recognize that community is something we make happen, and that our school is one of the best places to do that. In the best of all possible worlds, education is a community concern.

And so, as we move into 2012, Ruch School is looking for volunteers for the spring lineup of after-school enrichment. Future offerings are limited only to the interests, imagination and expertise of our friends and neighbors. If you would like to be a part of Ruch School's volunteer-led enrichment program, or have an idea to share, please call or email Margaret della Santina, and help keep Ruch School a true community school.

Margaret Perrow della Santina
541-899-9950 • mperrow@sonic.net

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7604 Hwy 238
Jacksonville, OR 97530
Fax: (541) 899-1772
http://www.ramsayrealty.com

Jayda Wood
Realtor®
Cell: (541) 973-9105
Email: jayda@ramsayrealty.com