



# DOME SCHOOL TIMES



Why the long fence?  
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## End of an era: Goodbye and thanks, Teacher Katherine!

The year was 1989. Chris Evert had played her last US Open and the cost of a gallon of gas crept above one dollar. Tiananmen Square was fresh in the news, while the fall of the Berlin Wall was still a few months away. The president was George Bush—the first one—and here in the Illinois Valley, Katherine Roncalio began teaching at the Dome School. This week, after 27 years, she concludes her tenure.

According to school board minutes from August 1989, “The board discussed the adding to the staff of Debbie Murphy and Katherine Roncalio. It was decided to pay Katherine \$250 per month. Her hours will be 12:30 – 3:30.” Of course, her workload and hours expanded substantially in the following years, though perhaps her pay didn’t get all that much better. (Sorry, Katherine!)

Deborah Murphy recalls their time together fondly. “I taught side by side with Katherine. We went to the beach, the river, the mountains, museums, and theatres—learning all the way. We taught the children all kinds of things and they taught us.”

Regarding Katherine, Deborah notes, “She is amazingly talented. Through the years she created giant papier-mache sculptures: a giant King Tut, the Roman twins Romulus and Remus, an ox from the Oregon Trail! Katherine has a heart of gold, the passion of an Italian woman, and the hands of Michelangelo.”

In addition to her elementary class duties, Katherine taught for the Rangers after-school program for many years. According to Sarah Kuhn, a former board member and teacher and current parent, “Whether she was filling two hundred water balloons, bringing her pony for us to groom and ride, creating a nature trail, or helping kids with homework, Katherine always threw her body, heart, and mind into it.”

One of Sarah’s fondest memories of Rangers is when she and Katherine quite literally threw their bodies into things. For several years, part of the year end celebration included a food fight. “We collected a large pile of undesirable food products,” she says. “Outdated sauerkraut and relish, strange flavors of Jello and pudding, heaps of overcooked spaghetti. The kids stood behind two long rows of tables piled with food. The Rangers staff, which included Katherine and myself, slowly walked between the ranks of the children who delightedly hurled handfuls of noodles and pickles at us. We laughed and laughed, careful not to open our mouths or eyes too wide. It was messy. It was raucous. It was fun.”

Such activity was more than just teachers and students having fun, however; it was

an educational philosophy. As Sarah says, “Katherine believes in the value of play as a powerful teaching tool which promotes skill-building, problem-solving, and creative social relationships. Empowering the kids in these ways, Rangers became a very special, kid-centered society.”

Susan Gustafson, school administrator and a longtime colleague of Katherine’s, witnessed this first hand. She recalls a former Rangers student returning to the school many years later to tell Katherine that she really made a big difference in his life, helping point him in a positive direction, during a time of struggle. “Katherine doesn’t cry much, but I think it brought tears to her eyes.”

Katherine was also known for coordinating the annual school Bike-A-Thon fundraisers in September and the Martin Luther King Jr. celebrations in January, with the latter demonstrating a focus on social justice issues and history which she brings to the classroom.

According to Ryan Forsythe, current parent and school co-administrator, “My boys started at the school in September 2013 and two weeks later, Rep. DeFazio came to town. Katherine mobilized the students and parents to be outside the county building rallying in support of the trees. (See photo, below). The fact that the first field trip of the year was a protest/rally confirmed for me that the Dome School was a



special place and the right place for my family.”

Empowering students with her love of play and sharing her deep respect for justice, diversity, and the environment, Katherine will be sorely missed. But she will remain part of the Dome School family. For just as she concludes teaching in the elementary, her granddaughter prepares to enter the same classroom, having completed Kindergarten this week.

Deborah Murphy sums things up best: “Katherine’s love of learning will continue as she leaves this phase of her life and moves on to the next set of adventures. Thanks for sharing so much with me, the children, families and community. Much love!”

Yes, thank you so much, Katherine. On behalf of present and past students, families, school board, and staff, thank you for your dedication to our children for so many years. Until we meet again...Happy (Oregon) Trails to you!

ABOVE: Katherine Roncalio teaching at the school during a lesson on the Renaissance.

CENTER: During Representative Peter DiFazio’s visit to Cave Junction in September 2013, Katherine (below giant puppet, flashing peace symbol) leads a Dome School field trip to show support for our trees.

BELOW: No, she’s not riding off into the sunset just yet. That’s Katherine with her other love, during a recent Dome School Chinese New Year Parade.



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## Barter Faire to return June 17, 18, & 19 Three days of music, fun, kids with rocks

This summer on June 17th, 18th, and 19th, the Hope Mountain Barter Faire will be returning for its 14th year. For people who haven’t been, the Barter Faire is three days of buying, bartering, selling, awesome bands and music, dancing, talking, booths, good food, and having kids come up to you and ask if you would like to buy some rocks (such as me).

I go to the Barter Faire with my mom and dad every year and it’s really fun. When I arrive I usually find some of my friends trying to sell rocks and accompany them for a while.

We like to play various games like zombie tag, hide and seek, or just regular tag. It’s a lot more fun with all the rows of tents to duck behind, or run in between, and it’s always easy to start a game because almost every kid I know who lives in the Illinois Valley is there.

I can go to the kids village if I get bored and get on the swings, but getting bored is rare. I am not an adult, so I do not know if it is fun for them (it could suck), but from a kid’s point of view (or at least mine), Barter Faire is awesome.

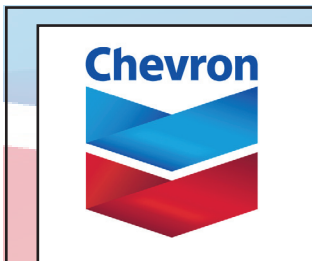
For those who are thinking about skipping it, remember that it raises money for my school, the Dome School and we need your help funding it.

For more information go to [hopemountainbarterfaire.org](http://hopemountainbarterfaire.org), which has been recently updated to include an A-Z telling more about the Faire and there’s a gallery of t-shirts and posters. (This year’s poster is on the left. It was done by my dad, Ryan Forsythe.)

Hope to see you this summer!

by Rory Forsythe-Elder  
Senior 5th Grade Correspondent

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