



(Photo by Laura Mancuso, Illinois Valley News)

Women of the Year Lindsey Gillette received her award from the I.V. Chamber of Commerce Friday, May 20 at the Chateau.

Valley boy takes top spot at 3 Rivers

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IVN Contributing Writer

David Valenzuela will become interim superintendent of Three Rivers School District (TRSD) beginning July 1.

Valenzuela was chosen from two finalists following interviews during a board executive session May 11.

He served as TRSD director of curriculum and instruction, technology, and federal programs for the past four years.

Valenzuela grew up in the Illinois Valley and attended Selma Elementary. He graduated from Illinois Valley High School in 1991. Including his time as a student in the school system, he's been associated with the district for over 37 years.

During his career, he's worked in almost every capacity in TRSD, including maintenance.

He's taught middle and high school, and worked in administrative capacities at all school levels and the district office.

Before taking his current position, he served as principal at Evergreen Elementary for six years.

He also served as assistant principal at Lincoln Savage Middle School for two years, assistant principal at Eagle Point High School for one year, and taught multiple subjects for Fleming Middle School and Illinois Valley High School for six years.

Valenzuela holds a Master of Arts in secondary education degree from Southern Oregon University, and a Bachelor of Arts in secondary education from Western Oregon University.

When asked how his long association with the school district prepared him to lead it, he responded, "Having that experience is one of the most valuable tools at my disposal. Our community, our families and our students have their own ideas on what a quality education should look like. If I don't already share those ideas, I believe that growing up here allows people to feel comfortable coming to me with concerns. At the very least I hope that the people of TRSD have trust and faith in my ability to represent them in my role as superintendent."

Valenzuela stated that TRSD has moved in a very positive direction over the past two years and he felt relationships between the district and the school board, the collective bargaining units and the community in general are strong and productive.

"My priority is to maintain this positive

momentum and keep the focus of our work on improving learning conditions for our students," he said, and added, "We are stronger when we work together!"

When asked if he had a favorite teacher or counselor that influenced him to choose a career in education, he replied, "I can't say that I had a favorite educator over the course of my educational career, but I had many memorable and positive influences during my time as a Three Rivers student. My most recent memory is of Gary Thornhill. He was my teacher, coach and then colleague when I was teaching at Illinois Valley High School. Gary has always been a great mentor, to me and many young folks from the Illinois Valley. I value his influence and guidance greatly. Another positive influence on me as an educator has been Jann Taylor. Her professionalism and dedication to building strong programs for kids motivates me to be a better educator and all-around person."

As the Director of Curriculum, Valenzuela made it a focus to be involved in activities that would have a positive impact on students.

"It is my hope that I will find ways to leverage my new position to broaden my resources and influence to better the educational offerings we provide to the students of TRSD," he said.

When asked if he could change one thing about TRSD, what it would be, he said, "Superficially I would change the cost of transportation to the district. We cover a staggering number of miles every day to get our students from home to school and back again. We are laying millions of dollars on the road every year, and I wish we could put them into our classrooms. The state reimbursement model for transportation is critically flawed and needs to be reworked."

He then said, "On a deeper level I would like to

change the apathy toward education that I see every day in every corner of our district."

"Don't get me wrong, we have many students and families that place a high importance on education and hard work. However, there are far too many families and students on the opposite end of the spectrum as it relates to the importance of a quality education in their lives."

"As human beings, it is in our very nature to be learners. We learn to understand, we learn to overcome and we learn to transcend beginning from birth. I hope I can nurture this instinct and promote a passion for lifelong learning in every single student we serve."

When asked if he has ideas for increasing graduation rates he said he felt too many students are not making it to their senior year and walking across the graduation stage due to apathy and not seeing the importance of education. I hope to address this issue at its roots. I want students to retain a love for learning that many enter kindergarten with, throughout their educational career."

Finally, when asked how interested community members could best help TRSD, he said, "I have a deep admiration for our parent and community volunteers. We have so many people willing to help our schools and students. Our schools should be the capstone of our communities, a place of learning, sharing, collaboration and celebration. There were times when everyone in a community would go to a Friday night football game or holiday concert."

"More and more these days it is only the parents and family members that attend these activities. Interested community members can help TRSD by creating a TRSD community that is focused on creating the best possible opportunities for our students."

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