

KeizerCommunity

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Hopkins retires from Keizer Elementary

At the end of every school year, Gay Hopkins gets out her magic wand and turns all her Keizer Elementary second graders into third graders.

It's a ritual that has meant so much to students that one recently asked Hopkins to bring the wand to her graduation at Linfield College to turn her into a nurse.

But Hopkins did her magic for the final time last week.

After 34 years, 31 in the Salem-Keizer School District, including 18 at Keizer Elementary, she is retiring.

Hopkins has wanted the same thing for all of her students—a great life and an invite to their graduation.

"I hope my enthusiasm for learning really makes a difference for all of my students," she said. "I want them to feel positive that they can do it. I want them to appreciate and enjoy what they've got."

While her mom was a teacher, it was once the last thing Hopkins wanted to be when she grew up.

"In middle school, I was absolutely not going to be a teacher," she said. "I think it was rebellious. I'm not going to be like my parents."

But in high school she changed her mind and enrolled at Western Oregon University.

After graduation, Hopkins accepted a position in South America, teaching English to kindergarteners in Colombia.

"I always wanted to go overseas and be a foreign exchange student as a kid," Hopkins said. "I didn't quite have the guts to do it while I was in high school. I learned Spanish. I learned a new culture. It was marvelous."

After three years, Hopkins followed her roommate in Colombia to Richmond Elementary in Salem. She then came to Keizer in 1999, taught first grade for a year and then moved to second.

"It was interesting when I came to Keizer because there's a more smaller town feel here and more volunteers," Hopkins said. "I had a couple wonderful men who would volunteer in my classroom and take kids and read to them. It's been a really nice fit to be here at Keizer. I really have loved it, all these years, and everyone is very caring and kind and there's a more spirit of volunteerism here, which I really appreciate."

Hopkins acknowledged the profession has changed over the years.

She once had a kid who was interested in giant squids so her class did animal reports and learned a lot about giant squids that year. However, due to Common Core and other state standards, that would be harder to do now.

"I like a little bit more of that flexibility where you can have a little bit bigger choice," she said. "I love the creative element of teaching. For me that's been great to design and develop lessons and what will be meaning-



Gay Hopkins stands in front of a pair of portraits her second grade students painted. Hopkins is retiring after being in the Salem-Keizer School District for 31 years.

Lessons Learned

A five part series on retiring teachers in Keizer

By DEREK WILEY
Of the Keizertimes

ful for kids and what activities will spark their interest, what will they learn and grow from most. When you have kids that are enthusiastic about learning something, it sticks with them."

Hopkins' interests include reading, dinosaurs and art.

As a kid, Hopkins remembers not getting in trouble when she would draw on the walls. Instead her mom would say, "Why don't you use nice paper."

"Art is my speciality and I

told the staff if they invite me back, I'll teach art lessons if they like."

On the wall in her classroom is a Vincent Van Gough painting she brought back from Paris.

"I like to bring a bit of the world into my classroom," Hopkins said.

She is looking forward to traveling more and plans to paint Claude Monet's garden either this fall or next summer. She's going to Washington, D.C. later this month.

Before Hopkins walked out of Keizer Elementary for the last time as a full-time teacher, she made sure to sign up as a volunteer.

"I have one boy, he lost his mom this year to cancer," Hopkins said. "It's really rough. I'm hoping to come back and read to him and eat lunch with him and his brother."

Hopkins hasn't ruled out teaching again, maybe even overseas. Another teacher at Keizer Elementary has taken a

job at Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam and invited Hopkins to visit.

"Teaching is such a great pleasure to me," Hopkins said. "I like being enthusiastic about learning new things. I feel like a calling to it, like driven towards it. It will be really interesting to see how that transition goes to not doing this everyday and not starting a class in September We'll see where life takes me. It's going to be a new adventure and I'm looking forward to it."

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MHS Class of '76: reunion time

The MHS Class of 1976 is planning its 40th reunion on Oct. 1 at the Keizer Elks Lodge, 4250 Cherry Avenue N.E.

The affair begins at 6 p.m. Cost is \$15 per person and includes light munchies, a no-

host bar, and music at 8 p.m.

RSVP by Sept. 1. Mail to: Julie Erickson, 1380 West Meadows Ave. NW, Salem, OR 97304.

Email McNary76@aol.com for additional information.

Legos on display at Keizer Heritage

Legos, one of the world's top selling toys, are on display at the Keizer Heritage Museum and the Keizer Community Library through the end of July.

The exhibit showcases original creations and a Legos Robotics display from the collection of JoDene and Darren Summers. Most pieces are accompanied with a history card.

The two played with the Legos as children. When they grew older they stored them away rather than throwing them or giving them away. Legos got a boost with the release of *The Legos Movie* in 2014.

The Keizer Heritage Museum is located at the Keizer Heritage Center at 980 Chemawa Road NE. Hours are 2 to 4 p.m. on Thursdays and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays. Admission is free.

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Sundays: 8:15 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.
La Misa en Español: 12:30 p.m.

John Knox Presbyterian Church
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