

Blast Camp

The Keizer Police Department held its annual Blast Camp July 12-14 at Whiteaker Middle School.

Around 200 kids were in attendance.



A: Cameron Vandecoevering plays a game of dodgeball against officers from the Keizer Police Department.
 B: Colby Langbecker goes head first down an inflatable slide.
 C: Brodi Maxwell gets his face painted by Keizer City Councilor Amy Ryan.
 D: Michael Noble, from left, Olivia Boyd, Raegan Neice and Priya Short stand dressed in SWAT gear outside a SWAT truck.

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alive in that moment. This was something really different that awakens something in me that I should pursue."

Rist decided to enroll at Oregon State University, where he got his bachelor's and master's degrees.

"I learned a ton in college," Rist said. "Once I got to OSU with that vision of this is what I want to do, the people at OSU [Steven Zielke and Russell Christensen] totally took me under their wing. I think I was heart and no knowledge and they really helped equip me for this job."

Rist's first position out of college was the choir director at Hermiston High School. In three years, he grew the program from 70 students in four choirs to more than 220 in five choirs. He also directed

a men's choir at Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla.

"I think singing is for everyone," Rist said. "I think that anyone can learn to sing, like reasoning with math or learning to read and write. There's this social stigma that you either have it or you don't. I think it's something that you can learn and I'm pretty excited to teach it."

Rist had no intention of leaving Hermiston when he received a call from Mary Lou Boderman, coordinator of music and drama for the Salem-Keizer School District.

The opportunity to replace Jim Taylor at McNary was just too good to pass up so Rist applied.

"The first time I saw Jim in action was when I was an undergrad at OSU and we were touring and visited McNary," Rist said. "I saw his classroom and I thought, 'Wow, this is what high school choir

could be like.' I never imagined I would come back and teach in that classroom. I saw his kids perform at state last year and I was really inspired by that, too. They had tremendous energy. It feels like a really good fit. I know a lot of choir and music teachers in the district. I'm just glad to be on the team."

Rist is working with Taylor to make the transition as smooth as possible.

"Jim has really been amazing," Rist said. "We were saying we should write a book on how to transition from one teacher to the next. A lot of things we agree on. We have very similar philosophies on education and I think that's going to make this transition smooth and the way we differ, I think we both have respect for those differences."

Rist, who also has a passion for songwriting and composing, said McNary will have four choirs next year instead of three as the beginning choir is being split into a girls and boys chorus.

"We want to put students in the choir that is going to be the best fit for them, where they're going to be the most successful and learn the most through music," Rist said. "Every student matters. Every choir is a valuable community, not just the top group. I want McNary's choral program to really enrich the community of Keizer, go out there and spread the music beyond the high school's walls."

Rist also wants to honor what is already happening at McNary.

"It really feels like I'm stepping into the next level of music education," he said. "I saw the finale of [McNary] choir camp and that was inspiring, the quality of the music, the buy-in of the kids, it feels like I'm very fortunate to be here."

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