

KeizerCommunity

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Mangan at home in Cummings

By **DEREK WILEY**
Of the *Keizertimes*

From school bus driver to PE teacher to administration, Cummings Elementary's new principal, Martina Mangan, has done it all.

"I bring a good understanding for every employee in the district and where everybody is," she said. "I have a very high respect for people at all levels of the school operation."

Mangan grew up in Germany and got her teacher's license in Munich. She planned to teach English at a German secondary school, but then she met John, a Willamette University exchange student.

Facing an "academic flood" with too many college graduates and not enough jobs, Martina and John, newlyweds, decided to move to John's hometown of Keizer in 1986.

"John wanted to come home and I didn't have a job," Martina said. "We made the decision to let's try it in Oregon and if it works, maybe we'll stay. He stayed five years in Germany so we came up with the agreement, if we stay five years in Oregon and I still don't like it, then we can go back."

Between high school and college, Mangan had spent a year in Toronto as a nanny and it was there that she got to really practice her English, talking to a two-year-old.

"I was not shy to make grammatical errors in front of her because I knew she didn't know any better so I could



Martina Mangan stands in the library at Cummings Elementary, where she will serve as the school's principal. Mangan is originally from Germany but has worked in the Salem-Keizer School District since 1986, starting out as a school bus driver.

speaking freely," Mangan said.

She had visited friends in Arizona but never been to Oregon. Thankfully, the climate and terrain reminded her of home. However, Mangan's German teaching license wasn't good in Oregon so she had to go back

to school.

While getting her Oregon license, she drove a school bus because the training took just three weeks. After a year, Mangan, who was getting her degree to teach PE and German, began aiding a PE teacher at Morningside Elementary.

She got her license in 1989 and became a PE teacher at Four Corners.

"I was one of those kids that couldn't sit still very long and as a teacher I couldn't imagine teaching a subject where I'm just stuck in the classroom all day," Mangan said. "I wanted a balance between an academic subject and something that allows me to move as a teacher as well as

"I want to establish myself as a community member as well as a principal ..."

— Martina Mangan

with the kids."

After six years at Four Corners, Mangan became the German teacher and head swim coach at North Salem High from 1995 to 2003. She then moved up to assistant principal at South Albany, then back to North and then West Salem before deciding she wanted to get back to the elementary school level.

"I have always liked working with kids and that's why I came back to elementary,"

Mangan said. "I was in the high school for a long time and it's great to talk to 14-18 year olds because they have a better understanding of why education is so important to them but I enjoy that light that comes on when a kid learns to read or they finally understand that multiplication is just repeating addition."

Mangan also likes that elementary schools are smaller. Instead of around 2,000 kids, there are 450.

"An elementary school is more personal," she said. "You can eventually learn the names of all 450 kids and you know all of the teachers and their families. You can build more of a relationship. I really enjoy the elementary. It's great."

While Mangan has worked in schools all over the district, this is her first in Keizer, where she has lived with her husband, who teaches German at McNary, the entire time.

"I want to establish myself as a community member as well as a principal and this is the first time that I live and work in the same community," she said. "I live right close to here. It's just different if you work and live in the same community. I'm really looking forward to that."

Mangan said her first goal as Cummings principal is to learn the names of all the kids and get to know the families.

"If you don't know who you're teaching then it's hard to know what they need," she said.

Of Cummings' 439 upcoming first through fifth graders, 39 are English Language Learners who speak Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Norwegian, Lithuanian, Marshallese and Trukese.

Mangan, who knows German, English, French and some Spanish, believes her background will help her relate to those students and their families.

"Having grown up in another country I have a really good feeling for what immigrant families go through," she said.

Mangan is replacing Lisa Sundseth, who after eight years at Cummings is now the principal at Valley Inquiry Charter School.

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