

# McNary Klostet opens doors for Celtic students in need

By ERIC A. HOWALD  
Of the Keizertimes

Given the wide range of difficult conversations a teacher can have with a student, the most difficult might be the ones in which a student asks a teacher if they anything to eat. “The needs of our students are changing,” said Kim Pittsley, a counselor at McNary High School. “About 40 percent of our students are on free or reduced lunch plans and that’s not what people expect. The need is here.”

McNary is typically viewed as one of the more affluent schools in the Salem-Keizer School District.

Earlier this month, McNary and the Keizer Network of Women (KNOW), a subgroup of the Keizer Chamber of Commerce, unveiled the McNary Klostet. KNOW members have committed to an ongoing campaign to collect items for underprivileged students with donation barrels at Willamette Valley Bank and Keizer Chamber of Commerce office in Keizer Station.

The Klostet started with KNOW member Audrey Butler asking Pittsley whether the



Members of the McNary faculty and staff along with members of the Keizer Network of Women gather for the opening of the McNary Klostet earlier this month.

school could use some McNary-branded clothing left over from a previous event. Pittsley said she could. That query led to a larger effort both at the school and within KNOW.

“Audrey asked if we could organize a clothing drive and I said we should make it part of the (ongoing) KNOW efforts,” said Stephanie Wittman, the current KNOW president and a sales and marketing representative with ServiceMaster of Salem.

At McNary, Assistant Principal Rhonda Rhodes set out to find a space to house a larger collection of items.

Simply having a space to house the Klostet represented a dramatic shift for the better, said Pittsley, who is still stunned with how quickly everything came together.

“Since the beginning of the school year, about half my office had been filled with clothing donated for students. It’s also taken pressure off the teachers who had taken to having food and snacks in their classroom,” Pittsley said.

Given that asking for assistance isn’t easy, Pittsley said the Klostet is operated as a private shopping experience.

Struggling students can ask any trusted adult in the building to assist them with gaining access and Pittsley will call them down during the school day to “shop.”

“I have brand new backpacks in the store they can use to carry what they need. Students who need the help never leave looking like they’ve (been to the Klostet),” Pittsley said.

New and gently-used clothing (particularly items suitable for school and jobs) of all types is appreciated. The store also tries to have on-hand non-perishable food items that students can either eat during school or go home and prepare, like macaroni and cheese. Personal hygiene items, including feminine hygiene products, and staples like underwear are also needed.

In addition to donations coming in from the community, Pittsley said she’s already seen an increase in staff donations, too.

KNOW has a roster of volunteers who commit to checking the donation barrels once a week and getting the items to the school.

“Keizer comes together when they need to. Once the need is known, it’s just amazing how it keeps going,” Pittsley said. “I think it’s important that the community and McNary are working together and helping the students in need.”

## GRASSROOTS GOVERNMENT

### Public Art Commission

The Keizer Public Art Commission had its most recent meeting Tuesday, April 18. Here is what was discussed:

- Keare Blaylock from the Mid-Willamette Outreach Group, tasked with educating the public about stormwater, notified commissioners that the group is hosting an art contest. Artists will be encouraged to submit work that could be placed around storm drains at four Keizer locations. The finalists will be selected and presented to the commission for approval in June. Details on how to enter are forthcoming.

- Commissioners are contemplating a permanent “Pianos on Parade” exhibit for Keizer. The city participated in a nationwide program, which involves placing a decorated, working piano in a public space, several years ago. Commissioner Beth Melendy suggested obtaining a free piano from someone on Craigslist and asking McNary High School students to come up with a plan for painting it. With the school year rapidly coming to a close, the commission tabled the matter until a future meeting.

- Members of the commission are working with a grant writer to secure funding to carve two large tree stumps on the north side of the Keizer Civic Center. One chainsaw carver has expressed interest in the project, but applicants would need to submit a proposal for review by the commission.

- After deciding that a Chalk Festival, in which artists would draw in a public space, would not be a good fit for the Iris Festival because of the potential for rain, Commissioners agreed to table to issue until its January 2018 meeting.

### Festival Advisory Board

The Keizer Festival Advisory Board had its most recent meeting Monday, April 24. Here is what was discussed:

- Talk of the upcoming Keizer Eclipse event dominated the meeting. Board members approved the remainder of the concert line-up; solidified plans to have CERT volunteers on the scene throughout the weekend; and doled out tasks for a variety of other roles in the organizing process.

- Board members plan to meet informally on May 31 with stakeholders in the process. The May meeting of KFAB has been canceled.

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