

# KeizerCommunity

KEIZERTIMES.COM

## Claggett Creek maestro takes final bow

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

Claggett Creek Middle School's only orchestra director has retired.

Bruce Purdy, who came to the school when it opened 16 years ago, led his final concert on June 8.

"I personally have really enjoyed it here," Purdy said. "I've had great students and the staff is exceptional. I've had two outstanding administrators, Melissa Cole, who is now working for the state and my current administrator, Rob Schoepper, is by far the best guy I've ever worked for. When it comes to supporting a program and doing everything he can to make things happen, he's your guy."

Purdy first got the inkling to teach when a flute player in his high school orchestra said she thought he'd be good at it. He majored in bass and minored in violin at the University of Montana.

"I figured if I was strong on both ends, the middle would come together," Purdy said.

Teaching, instead of performance, would allow Purdy to pursue other interests, like playing bass guitar in a band.

"I felt if I really devoted myself strictly to symphonic stuff then I would never get to do the other stuff that much," Purdy said. "It was the path that allowed me to enjoy music to the fullest."

After starting out in Mon-

tana and then moving to Arizona, Purdy went to Stephens Middle School when it opened in Salem and then followed principal Dave Cook to Claggett Creek. His first advanced orchestra had just nine students. This year, Claggett's two orchestras had 70 students, playing three concerts as well as a Veteran's Day assembly and field trips to the local elementary schools.

Purdy recently received a letter from a former student, Josephine Lim, who said everything he ever hoped a kid would get out of his class.

"I can say without a doubt in my mind that you're the most hard working and dedicated teacher I have ever had or will ever have," Lim wrote. "You did all that you could to see your students succeed and for that I thank you. You've impacted my life in ways that I can't even comprehend. Music has and always will be a huge part of my life thanks to you. I feel so fortunate to have had you as my teacher for five years of my orchestra career. I wouldn't have had them any other way."

"I had the honor of being conducted by you when we played everything from *Smooth Criminal* to *Irish Legend* to *Pavane*. I still remember when you told me that I was the first person you ever let use your baton. Or when you asked me to cue in the other sections for *Fire in*



KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley

Bruce Purdy directed his final orchestra concert at Claggett Creek Middle School on June 8. He is retiring after 16 years.

*the Forge*. There are too many good times we've shared and good things to say about you.

"You've influenced the Salem-Keizer district's music program by being a role model to all the other teach-

ers. Your legacy will live on. I hope I have left a mark on your life as you have mine. I miss eating donuts after a successful concert (thank you for those, by the way). I miss

how I could see all your hard work drip down your face in the form of sweat bands while conducting. And of course, I miss hearing 'loosen your bowels and get ready to go.

Happy retirement, Mr. Purdy. You've earned it."

With all the changes at Claggett Creek, a seven-period day and new principal, Purdy thought it was a good time for him to leave as well. Purdy also wasn't sure he could any longer give the position everything he had.

"I always go at a job 110 percent and the older you get you can start to see things in your mind that are a little bit harder for me," Purdy said. "You have to think a little more and work a little harder. The energy in the tank is going to start to dwindle. And I didn't want to be a teacher who was coasting and you're just doing the job and not really doing it with passion and energy."

In retirement, Purdy said he plans to play more and teach private lessons.

"I still want the one-on-one connection with kids and working on things," he said.

Purdy has also accepted a job as the bass instructor at Chemeketa Community College and wants to spend more time with his wife and grandson.

"She's been so patient," Purdy said. "She would be the first one to tell you there's a lot of hours spent on this job."

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