

CCMS principal about joy of learning

By DEREK WILEY
Of the Keizertimes

Aaron Persons knew he'd be a good fit as the new principal at Claggett Creek Middle School when he received his first Panthers t-shirt with the words "integrity" and "grit."

"That's what I try to encourage kids, to be a part of something special though hard work," Persons said.

"That's the reputation Claggett has, we get good results, hard working kids that achieve a lot. The staff has the same reputation, we'll do whatever it takes."

Persons was born and raised as one of nine children in Stayton.

After high school, he went to the University of Notre Dame with plans to be a doctor.

However, Persons' career path changed when he transferred to Willamette University and discovered he enjoyed spending time with his mentee through Big Brothers Big Sisters of America and coaching his younger siblings in basketball more than volunteering in the emergency room at Salem Hospital.

Persons started teaching science at a middle school in Beaverton.

When his own kids were born, Persons has four, ages 6-16, he transferred to Leslie Middle School in Salem, where he taught half time along with being a behavioral specialist for the department of education.

"That's where I got my first bug," Persons said. "There were a couple of

principals that I worked with, Steve Nelson and Mike Miller, and they gave me some leadership opportunities. That's the first time I really thought about education leadership."

Persons' first job in administration was as an assistant principal at a Title IX middle school in Beaverton.

After four years, he was hired as the principal at another middle school in Beaverton, where he served for five years.

Persons then spent the 2016-17 year as the principal at Walker Middle School in Salem, which got him much closer to his home in Stayton.

"I probably would have stayed there a long time," Persons said of Beaverton. "I loved it and the school is great but driving to Beaverton, I spent three to four hours in the car everyday for nine years. I didn't think about it at the time but that's crazy. You get used to it. You get attached to the community."

As principal at Walker, Persons got to know the community in west Salem by participating in Rotary and other local groups.

He looks forward to doing the same in Keizer.

"I want to get to know everybody," Persons said. "Talk to parents and find out what we're good at and what we need to get better at."

AVID strategies were used at his previous schools and Persons has attended the summer institute the past six years, which should help him at Claggett Creek, which

became just the third AVID National Demonstration middle school in Oregon last spring.

"Obviously they've done a lot of things really well here," Persons said.

"I'm going to come in and be supportive. I want to find out the history and all the work that went into it, which is kind of what I've been doing here now. You can see it from the staff. They're really excited. When they talk about teaching, they know what they're talking about. They talk about best practices and the AVID strategies that really work."

As a demo school, CCMS becomes a learning lab where schools all over the country can visit to see AVID at work. Three large showcases are scheduled this school year.

Persons also wants the Keizer community to be aware of all that's going on at Claggett Creek.

"I certainly want the community to know as much about us as visitors across the state do," Persons said.

"We're partners with everyone. We're looking for ways to help the community and ways the community can partner with us. That's a big thing for me."

Persons wants to make learning fun and be sure that every student feels connected to the school.

"I kind of have the same philosophy for students and teachers and the whole team, when people are having fun and loving what they do,



KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley

Aaron Persons is the new principal at Claggett Creek Middle School in Keizer.

they get better results," Persons said.

"I focus on the joy of learning for our kids. My goal is high levels of achievement for every kid but feel connected. Make sure we're connecting every kid in some way to their school."

Persons is replacing Rob Schoepper, who is now the principal at McKay High School.

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Magic comes to senior center

The Keizer/Salem Area Senior Center is hosting a Fall Magic Dinner Party Sunday, Sept. 24.

In addition to a meal, the night includes entertainment by Dan the Magic Man and

music by Jeff Blythe. A raffle for a stay at Three Rivers Casino will also be held.

Doors open at noon and dinner will be served at 12:30 p.m.

The event will run to 4

p.m.

Tickets are \$12 in advance or \$15 at the door, 930 Plymouth Drive N.E.

The event is one of many regular fundraisers for the senior center.

Get rid of fertilizer, chemicals

September is the time of the year to get rid of any empty chemical and fertilizer containers you may have in your garden shed or garage.

The containers, including jugs and buckets, must be stripped of any label books, lids, caps and bucket handles.

OVS Salem will collect the

containers from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 15, at its location at 3526 Brooks Ave. NE. There is no fee to the public.

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