

# AVID, continued from Page A1

strategies. The school's graduation rate went up 4 percent last year and McNary seniors received \$6 million in scholarships, up from \$1.9 million the year before.

"We are producing a product in a McNary High School graduate that is exemplary," Jespersen said. "That doesn't just happen on its own. That hard work is a result of us having systems in place that are giving kids experiential learning in classrooms in context that are helping create a competitive advantage. That's really what we're trying to do is give our graduates a competitive advantage when they apply to college, when they apply for scholarships, when they're out in the work place, they have all the skills needed."

Past students are also returning to get help with scholarships.

"The students are coming

back because they feel loved and supported and they know that we're here for them," McNary AVID Coordinator Heidi Tavares said.

Jespersen has heard that McNary just feels different than other schools in the area.

"There's a vibe that we're trying to create and it's a vibe of excellence and it's a vibe where we care about our kids and the kids have a really distinct pride in coming to school here and

"It's a vibe of excellence ... where we care about our kids."

— Erik Jespersen  
McNary principal

that's a very real thing and we've been very intentional about creating that here," Jespersen said. "Culture is extremely important. It's really hard to get but it's something that you must have if you're going to have a great high school."

McNary has set a goal of becoming an AVID National Demonstration School by 2020 as part of the process of being a world class high school.

A textbook and film based on AVID's new curriculum on focused note-taking, featuring McNary students, is set to be released in April.

"We also want our students to be noticed and recognized," Jespersen said. "When you go into a classroom with some visitors, I see it, kids have that pride."

# CASE, continued from Page A1

see if Speten was inside. An autopsy determined Speten died of blunt force trauma to the head and she had been deceased at least 24 hours before she was found.

At the time, a neighbor told the *Keizertimes* he had last seen Speten about four days prior to the discovery of her body. He said Speten came to his apartment after he overheard her side of an argument with a man, claiming she was being "manipulated." She asked to use a cell phone, and called her own after it had allegedly been stolen. He also said there was music playing in the apartment for several days

before Speten was found.

Keizer police investigated Speten's death for the next few months, but leads eventually dried up. Lathrop said they do know who was coming and going from the apartment around the time Speten was killed.

"At the very least, we believe there are people who know what happened and, if we had that, it could lead to making an arrest," Lathrop said. "Especially in homicides, there's always leakage because people talk."

The most recent leads in the case are now about three years old and didn't turn up enough to move forward with official charges.

Lathrop declined to speak on the details of the scene, a weapon or possible motive

because that information will help police validate any new information they receive.

"We don't want those individuals to know what we know. If we let too much information out it could help them formulate a story," he said.

While there hasn't been much movement in the investigation recently, Lathrop said Speten's murder isn't what police officers consider a "cold case."

"With cold cases, you don't have a suspect or you don't have a place to investigate. This is dormant. It's still something we talk about amongst ourselves and we maintain regular contact with the victim's family," he said. "We still think about her and her family and we

want to get this resolved for them. The people that were involved need to be held accountable regardless of what happened."

Until then, it's a waiting game for police and Speten's surviving family, which includes her mother and four children.

"The hope is that the right people will have a change of heart and they realize that this is important. We can't force them to talk, but we hope that guilt gets to them," Lathrop said.

If you have information about the murder of Christina Speten, call the Keizer Police non-emergency number at 503-390-3713 or email [Tips@keizer.org](mailto:Tips@keizer.org). Tipsters can remain anonymous.

# LAWYER: Finding substance in the emotion

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solution was too short-term; the funding provided by them can do great work, but once they've dried up you're back where you started. The third option was to establish a parks fee, which is the route they ended up taking. Or, they could simply do nothing and begin shutting parks down.

The parks fee, then, became a massive undertaking for Matt. After countless meetings and handing out surveys with his 12-year-old daughter Baylee, it finally came down to the vote in July of 2017.

Matt says the initial public response to the survey results was at first very negative.

"I was getting absolutely blasted on social media," he said. "It was terrifying, I was so scared to jump in that arena."

But that fear quickly turned into a realization about how important the discussion taking place was. He began responding to comments and engaging directly with the public on the details of the plan.

"Everybody's opinion matters even if they don't share the same view as I do."

It became a learning

experience.

"There's substance and objective in the emotion that are important that need to be pulled out and used in objective factual responses," he explained. "I went from being terrified to being able to say 'look, these are the facts as I know them.'"

This is how all public policy should be decided, according to Matt: by listening to the people with an open mind and finding the facts. Only through rigorous and productive discussion and diligent work can honest policy be made.

### Volunteerism

"You could be as effective or non-effective as you want to be in Keizer," Matt said. "But it's so much more fun to be effective."

Matt cites his family as the reason he's able to put

so much work in. "It's only because of their support that I'm able to do what I do."

He is excited to see his son Zach, 6, and daughter Baylee, 12, begin to get involved as they grow older. His wife, Jessica, has been a huge source of support: "My wife has the biggest heart in the world."

Matt is working on wrapping up the second Keizer Rotary Arboretum Project and recently joined the Keizer Planning Commission.

"The planning commission is going into some heavy discussions about the future of Keizer," he said.

Now that the parks will have steadier funding, much of his and other parks board members' time can be spent making sure parks are kept up and continue to serve their communities.

"Keizer is one of those places where I think we do a really good job of taking care of each other as neighbors and do a really good job of trying to make Keizer a great place to be," he said.



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Father Gary L. Zerr, Pastor  
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Sundays: 8:15 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.  
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