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Roberson retires at McNary

By DEREK WILEY
Of the Keizertimes

Three days after Kathleen Roberson submitted her resume, McNary High School called.

"I was surprised that they would be so interested in someone for biology," Roberson thought.

But McNary had something else in mind.

"They saw I did computer programming and that's how I got the job here," Roberson said. "I thought about it for about two years as I was teaching computer science and wishing I was in biology, then I turned around one day and said this is fun. I'd be a fool to go back to science."

Roberson taught computer programming for 26 years at McNary before retiring last month.

"I like puzzles and kids who like puzzles, it's nice to give them good things to be able to wrap their heads around," Roberson said. "The kids are the fun part. Working with kids, you're alive everyday. You've got to be on your toes, you've got to remember what you're doing."

Roberson grew up in San Diego.

When her parents urged all three of their kids to go to college in states they'd never been to, Roberson chose New Mexico.

"Most of the good things that happened in my life came out of that," said

"I like puzzles and kids who like puzzles."

— Kathleen Roberson

Roberson, which included meeting her husband, also a teacher.

Roberson followed her mother into the profession and taught science for three years in New Mexico before deciding to move to Oregon.

"Albuquerque is a beautiful place but parts of it are quite scary and we didn't want to raise our three kids there," Roberson said.

"My dad's family was in Washington and we'd been through Oregon a million times and just thought it was beautiful."

With advances in technology, Roberson had to relearn her subject every three years.

"I've done it for so long that now I'm alert as things pop up and start trying to figure out what are the universities doing with this, is this going to be the wave of the future, once a new language comes out," Roberson said.

"There are three or four colleges that I've always checked every year to find out what has changed and what hasn't. What's



Kathleen Roberson works with McNary High School student Jonathan Lopez-Ventura in one of her computer programming classes. Roberson is retiring after 26 years at the school.

interesting is there are some problem solving things that are the same year after year. They haven't found a better way to do them."

Roberson taught computer languages, starting students with BASIC, then moving to Java and Unity.

"The geeks of the world have a place to come and they should," Roberson said. "I've got a good many software engineers out there

that send me emails once in a while."

One is a professor teaching computer science at George Washington University.

"He sent me an email out of the blue and I hadn't seen him in probably 20 years and it was so nice to see and I went to his website at the university and I could understand one word in three of the titles of the papers he'd written," said Roberson, who replied, "I'm very proud of you. I don't know what

you do, but I'm glad you're doing it."

Roberson knew it was time to retire after constantly being sick in the fall.

"As you get older there are weaknesses and you start to pick up germs a lot faster," she said. "When I was sick constantly, higher level thinking goes away. When you're teaching computer science, that's a cheat to the kids, because they need me at my best."

While Roberson will miss

the kids, she will have more time to focus on her writing. She's written five books including *At Risk of Being a Fool* about her experiences teaching in Albuquerque, and four fantasy novels.

Roberson is moving to Washington to be closer to her two sons and grandchildren. She also wants to travel more.

"Sometime in the next year or two I want to go to the Kentucky Derby for real instead of watching it on TV," Roberson said.

"The first year (1973) I watched, Secretariat took the triple crown."

Her other hobbies include making baby quilts.

"It's a geometric thing that helps me be calm, putting pieces together to make a pattern, which is really all programming is, in its own way," Roberson said.

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