

AVID validation celebration

By JOSHUA MANES
Of the Keizertimes

The McNary High School AVID program staff had reason to celebrate on Thursday, April 21, when they were officially named an AVID national demonstration school.

"The recognition is like a public acknowledgement that what we do here in Salem-Keizer, and McNary in particular, is really world-class," Salem-Keizer Public Schools AVID district coordinator Barb Bamford said. "It really is the best. Our data proves it, what our kids say proves it, what we see in classrooms proves it."

The staff gathered in the McNary library with sparkling cider, donuts and music in honor of the accomplishment.

Principal Erik Jespersen said the validation was the culmination of a seven-year journey. Jespersen has been at McNary for eight years, and said that first year was about building morale and general systems. With those in place, McNary was able to begin the work of becoming the world-class school that Jespersen envisions.

"Our systems were all embedded in this work with AVID and now we're seeing the fruits of that with closing access gaps with all of our students, high graduation rates, amazing scholarship amounts, beautiful CTE spaces that fully integrate with one another and with our school," Jespersen said. "This was all part of the master plan and today's the day to celebrate that."

The years that it took to get to this point might have been extended slightly with the pandemic.

According to assistant principal and AVID

administrator Heidi Tavares, McNary was preparing for its mock validation in March 2020. The buildup from 2015 to 2020 had to come to a halt.

"The staff and everybody had to put a pause on it because of COVID," Tavares said. "This year it has been getting students and staff back up to where we were."

But powering through the pandemic and getting to this moment may make the accomplishment more impressive.

"To have a high school that is an AVID national demonstration site really shows that even in the pandemic we kept our focus on building strong cultures, having rigorous instruction," Salem-Keizer Public Schools superintendent Christy Perry said. "The systems that they had in place prepared them for the moment of the pandemic. But to get the recognition is really important because we know how hard our educators are working across the district."

The validation, good for three years, means new responsibilities and expectations for McNary.

Showcases for the AVID program will be held to demonstrate the program to schools and individuals that have an interest. And they won't always be scheduled in advance.

"It really means our doors are open," Tavares said. "At any time they can call us and say 'Hey, this school really wants to come in and see what AVID looks like.'"

Bamford believes the status brings additional expectations not only from the school and AVID,



McNary, SKPS and AVID staff pose with the AVID national demonstration school banner they received on Thursday, April 21, in the McNary library.

Photo by JOSHUA MANES of the Keizertimes

but also from the community.

"You've said it's a good school, you've said you're doing good things for kids, now you have this title for the next three years," Bamford said. "It can't just end today, you have to be ready for, not just for people to call for a visit, not just for us to set up a showcase for people to come see it, but also just for people to pop in. It sets a level of expectation from our community. 'You're a demonstration school, I expect my kids to get a certain education or a certain level of care when they come to this school.'"

After the three years, McNary will need to be reassessed to keep its status as a national demonstration school.

At the end of the initial validation process, the school was given a set of recommendations, Bamford said. Those recommendations become the goals for the next three years, when a validation team will return and look at the program through the lens of those recommendations.

To keep their title as a demonstration school, McNary will have to show they have made the steps outlined in the recommendations.

"It means they'll have to work even harder to maintain that status," Perry said. "But also I think what we do as leaders is say 'Okay, now what's the next thing? How are we going to be even better?' We always want to continue to learn and to grow."

Obituary

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Nellie "Lorraine" Gesner

April 18, 1937 - March 29, 2022

&

Royal Dolph Gesner

March 15, 1936 - April 4, 2022

Nellie "Lorraine" (Standish) Gesner April 18, 1937 - March 29, 2022 and Royal Dolph Gesner March 15, 1936 - April 4, 2022 passed away, just six days apart. Lorraine was 84, and Royal was 86. Those who knew them knew their devotion to one another. Royal and Lorraine were married for 65 years. They met at North Salem High School. Royal, always interested in mechanics and engineering, rode a gas powered bicycle that some made fun of, but it made Lorraine smile. After school, they would walk side by side to the local ice cream shop. It was the beginning of a love story that lasted 70 years. Lorraine and Royal were married on July 6, 1956. They started their family and began to build a life for themselves, settling in Keizer, where they lived out the rest of their days. They were devoted members of The South Salem Friends Church, and active philanthropists, donating to many charities throughout their lifetime. Together, they had four children, David (Reneliza), Gregory (Tangelee), Mark, and Rebekah, all of whom they are survived by. They are also survived by Royal's sister, Ellen Clifford, 10 grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren.

Lorraine worked in the Claims Department at SAIF, the State Accident Insurance Fund, for 11 years. She was also an active member in her community



as a Cub Scout, Blue Bird and Camp Fire leader, a registered Daughter of the American Revolution, a member of the Red Hat Society, an avid bowler, a seamstress, craftswoman, and lover of games like Rook and Mahjongg. She was known for her sense of humor and teasing nature, always in good fun. Her greatest joy was her family, and she will be remembered for her unabridged devotion to her children and grandchildren. One of the many ways her warmth will be remembered is by the hundreds of quilts



she lovingly made and gifted.

Royal was best known for his ability to fix anything with mechanical or electrical parts. He had a quiet, helpful nature; always offering to be an usher at church, greeting people with his soft, kind grin. He was steadfast and headstrong, although, a goofball at heart. He worked at Boise Cascade for more than 40 years, taking only two sick days his entire career. He was determined to provide the very best for his family, and he never wavered. Royal loved to sing in

the church choir, tinker on anything that needed fixing, to record home movies, and to garden. He loyally planted flowers, to Lorraine's liking, in the heart shaped flower bed, in their backyard. His greatest devotion was to his wife.

In later years, Lorraine and Royal continued to donate their time to their church, volunteering their talents and time whenever possible. They traveled, went on cruises and spent as many hours as possible with their grandchildren. They loved socializing at the Senior Center and visiting their family out of state. When Lorraine became ill, Royal devoted everything to her. He was her sole caretaker until the very end. Their love for each other was illuminated during this time. When Lorraine passed away, it was only two days after her memorial that Royal had a heart attack. In some of his last words he said, "I want to be with my wife." Surrounded by family, he hugged each person to say goodbye, and now Lorraine and Royal are eternally together, forever, with their Father in Heaven.

Services for Royal will be on Saturday April 30, 2022 at The South Salem Friends Church, 1140 Baxter Road SE, Salem, OR 97302

Donations in Lorraine's memory can be made to the Salvation Army. Her memorial was held on April 2, 2022.