

Teachers rally for education funding

Camas, Washougal educators protest state budget

By DANIELLE FROST

Camas-Washougal Post-Record
Employees from the Camas and Washougal school districts joined forces to raise awareness during a teacher walkout day May 13. The demonstration was in protest against the state legislature for failing to fully fund K-12 education and keep class sizes smaller, among other issues.

Current and former teachers, as well as some classified

staff members, congregated at the busy intersection of 192nd Avenue and 34th Street in Camas, where they waved signs at passing motorists, many of whom honked and cheered back.

Leaders from both unions have emphasized that the work stoppage was not directed at the school districts. The Camas Education Association and Washougal Association of Educators voted to approve the walkout at the encouragement of the state teacher's union, the Washington Education Association.

Due to the missed day for students, the school year will

be extended to meet the state requirement of 180 school days.

The last day of school for students will now be Tuesday, June 16, instead of June 15. June 15 will now be a regular school day.

Rep. Liz Pike (R-Camas) noted that while she supports the teachers, she does not support the walkout or reasoning behind it.

"We have amazing teachers throughout the district who work hard and should be paid a living wage for what they do," she said. "Unfortunately, there's a lot of misinformation being spread around by their

union, the Washington Education Association, regarding funding of K-12 education."

Pike noted that if approved, the Senate Republican budget proposal would provide a nearly 18 percent increase for education, the largest percentage growth in 25 years.

"I'm very disappointed that the WEA is encouraging illegal teacher strikes by misinforming our teachers about budget proposals," she said. "I believe these walkouts (were) premature, because proposals are currently being negotiated, and the budget is not settled."



Photo by Danielle Frost

EDUCATORS FROM the Camas and Washougal school districts joined forces last Wednesday during a demonstration at 192nd Avenue and 34th Street during the teacher walkout day. The protest was against the state legislature for failing to fully fund K-12 education.

School wildlife gardens win Envirogorge award



Photo by Emily Kao

WHITSON ELEMENTARY Principal Todd McCauley, Cheri Anderson and Jennifer Rowlen of Gorge National Fishery, and Jeanette Burkhart of Yakama Native Fisheries accepted an Envirogorge award on behalf of a school science partnership. The Nature Space Awards are monthly prizes for people or businesses making a small-scale positive change to the natural areas of the Gorge.

White Salmon — Whitson Elementary's Schoolyard Habitat program received Envirogorge's Nature Space Award last Thursday.

The school in White Salmon earned accolades for its wildlife program, which is coordinated in partnership with Columbia River Gorge National Fish Hatchery (NFH), and Yakama Nation Fisheries (YNF). The Nature Space Award is a monthly prize for people or businesses making a small-scale positive change to the natural areas of the Gorge. The program reinforces the

school's natural science curriculum, with gardens for all grade levels K-3. Kindergartners maintain a worm-composting bin, fed with lunch scraps. The compost is

used in the first grade veggie garden that emphasizes their seed science curriculum. Second graders use the native pollinator garden to get up close and personal with bugs during their insect unit. Third grade students learn from Yakama Native Fisheries about culturally important plants for the native tribes, working hands on at an ethnobotany garden. The gardens don't require any watering. This makes students more aware of water usage, especially this year when the snow pack fell to record lows.

It has been an educational experience for many to see native planting instead of more traditional manicured areas. This is all part of the plan, according to Burkhart. "Part of my hope is that we change people's concept of landscape aesthetics," said Burkhart. "What some people call messy we call diversity."

Principal Todd McCauley is a strong supporter of the endeavor. "I love it. I see tremendous value in the educational link it creates from what the students are learning to the real world," said McCauley. The PTO and FWS provided much of the initial funding, but they rely on volunteered time from partners and other groups to maintain the gardens. If you are interested in helping with the Schoolyard Habitat project, call Cheri Anderson 509-493-2934 or email her at cheri_anderson@fws.gov.

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