

# SCHOOLS: Superintendent stresses setting expectations for fulfilling values

continued from A1



Photo by Kirby Neumann-Red

**A YEAR** of change: Hahn-Huston, left, helped thank school board members including Corinda Hankins Elliot and Brandi Sheppard at the ground-breaking at the new May Street School, in September. Assisting her is finance director Saundra Buchanan.

dual-language schools. Her career highlights at Gresham-Barlow, a district serving 11,000 students, included leading ongoing professional learning for eight principals and 10 assistant principals and the transition and purchase of digital curriculum, implementing the district's High School Success Plan and redesign of alternative programs.

Hahn-Huston spoke of her professional goals and the challenges of the district, and balancing being a mother as well as the district's chief executive officer.

Her children are Jack, a sixth grader at Hood River Middle School, Ethan, a Westside third grader, and Lucas, a Westside second grader.

Her kids are doing well, but coming to Hood River where Mom is the superintendent has been a period of adjustment.

"They'd forget I'm at work because when they'd see me, they thought I'm picking them up early, because I always worked in a district that wasn't where they lived, so it's new to them," Hahn-Huston said.

"They're now used to seeing me and when I have my badge, they know I'm not there to get them early for whatever I'm picking them

up for." Here is the first of the two-part interview, to continue in the Jan. 11 edition.

**HRN: What did you do your first morning as superintendent?**

**Hahn-Huston:** I don't remember much about it, but that whole first week was getting acclimated to where things are in the district. Before I interviewed, I came out a couple of times and drove around the county to see the schools and neighborhoods. I feel like I had a good understanding of that before my first week.

So coming to work it was really getting a better understanding of the systems in place and the folks at the District Office and who oversees what and the supports the schools have. I kicked off a kind of informal analysis and audit.

**HRN: I presume you've had a chance to visit each school.**

**Hahn-Huston:** Oh, yes, and I'm impressed. There's just a lot of great work that's happening.

**HRN: How have your kids adjusted?**

**Hahn-Huston:** They love it. They like riding their bikes, so they love that they can come home and get on a bike and be free and have the beautiful scenery rather than the city.

**'There is so much to do here. We still have a lot of bike trails to tour.'**

**Sara Hahn-Huston**

**HRN: What do you like to do as a family?**

**Hahn-Huston:** We play a lot of Legos; the boys are all addicted. They're great at building, but not so much taking them apart. Star Wars is big for them. They like riding bikes, and they're into making their own comic books now. They've been reading graphic novels and want to write their own. Lucas is an artist and his brothers help with the words. We like to travel and visit new places. We spend a lot of time together as a family.

**HRN: What have you done together?**

**Hahn-Huston:** There is so much to do here. We still have a lot of bike trails to tour. Call it an excuse to eat out, but we call it our "food tour": We've been trying different places and it's great because all the places I go there is always a neat connection to Hood River and people are very invested in the community and most have come from here. I've learned a lot about the

community just by eating out.

I'm a city girl getting transformed one orchard at a time. Because we're on an orchard tour, going to different places and discovering new ones all the time. I enjoy taking pictures and we've enjoyed the amazing views. We visited one orchard and sampled different pears and the boys were trying to decide which is their favorite pear variety. They decided it was the Gem. They're not used to that much variety.

**HRN: Your own children have a creative side; speaking as superintendent, how can schools foster creativity in our young people?**

**Hahn-Huston:** Personally and professionally I believe that through adults getting to know the kids brings a lot of that out. I know I'm thankful for it, and I don't think it's exclusive to me because I work in the district, but I've seen in the people and staff who have invested to get to know (students), to know what they like. Going to conferences, people knew my son well enough, because they spent enough time to know him and how to best motivate him and the areas of strengths he has and how to build on that.

The relationships the staff has and taking time to get to know the kids is the most

valuable thing.

Knowing the creative side of the kids and the things that honors the kids and that they know they are respected and encouraged is the best thing we can do as educators, because everyone is different. We can't treat everyone the same and as educators, we know that.

**HRN: Between class sizes, meeting state standards and the sheer physical challenges of each school, it can be hard to develop those relationships. How can the district and administration work to help teachers and kids find those ways to connect?**

**Hahn-Huston:** One, is setting the expectation of those relationships. At my first meeting with all the administrators, I asked them what we value in this district. This was back in the beginning of August. Independently of each other, I asked them to come up with three things they value. They wrote it on sticky notes and put it into categories and we put them all on the wall.

And hands down, the longest list was relationships: What do we value as a district?

If we know what we value, we're going to live what we value, and that's what they collectively showed, it was around equity and relationships. Knowing the value is there, setting the expectation for what that looks like, and

**'The relationships the staff has and taking time to get to know the kids is the most valuable thing.'**

**Sara Hahn-Huston**

creating the time and opportunity to make it visible and live and authentic is really our primary task.

Every principal has different leadership styles and how they go about it might look different, but as we get to know people through relationships we can find ways to encourage and engage them, too. So I think helping prin-

cipals knowing, if they don't know already, the best strategies to get them the tools to develop that.

Next issue: Hahn-Huston discusses professional development, equity, partnerships and how it feels to be new, yet be increasingly recognized as the superintendent.

"I strongly believe in the district here, or I wouldn't put my most precious investment of my kids into the care of the district by any means. As a superintendent, this (HRCS) was really the only job I was interested in. I was pretty selective not only about where I want to work but also where I want my kids to learn and grow."

## Board meets Jan. 8 in Hood River

Hood River County School District Board of Directors meets for the first time in 2020 on Jan. 8 at 6:30 p.m. at the District Office, Eugene and 10th streets.

The board agenda includes a presentation on "Why? Talk About Suicide?" by Hood River Valley High School Counselor Jennifer Schlosser and Anne Carlross, director of Students Services, and an update on Emergency Response planning by Director of Human Resources Catherine Dalbey and School Resource Deputy Joel Ives from Hood River County Sheriff's Office. The board will hear that updated emergency response binders are now available both in hard copy and digital formats for district leadership and emergency responders, and efforts are underway to create a training video tutorial about the binders and emergency response process.

Dalbey said the board will hear about a new "community-based wrap-around" approach to evaluating threats.

Participating in the ongoing HSTAT team — Hood River County Healthy and Safety Student Threat Assessment — are Mid-Columbia Center for Living, Department of Human Services, Juvenile Department, Sheriff's Office, District Attorney's Office, Oregon Youth Authority, Hood River Police Department and the school district.

# HR Pool starts free swim lessons Jan. 10

Hood River Valley Parks and Recreation District has announced that, in conjunction with the Hood River Valley High School Swim Team, the center will be offering free swim lessons instructed by the high school swim team athletes on Fridays in the month of January.

Dates are Jan. 10, 17, 24 and 31 from 6-6:20 p.m. These lessons will be held during the beginning of the

Friday \$1 swims, and participants will be asked to call or stop by Hood River Aquatics to register in advance of their requested date. The facility is located across from Hood River Middle School, at 17th and May streets.

Admission of \$1 will be required, but youth may swim after their lesson for the remainder of the evening open swim.

Limited spaces are avail-

able; call 541-386-1303 or stop by to register. Lessons begin promptly at 6 p.m., so anticipate arriving and being ready on the deck beforehand.

Late arrivals will not be permitted in the water.

"We thank you for your support of Hood River Valley Parks and Recreation District and thank the Hood River Valley Swim Team for their dedication to our communi-

ty's health and safety," said Mike Howard, Aquatic Center director.

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# SUDOKU

This week's Sudoku is presented by:

## BRIEN D. GIBSON

CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT

	1		2		3
		1	4		
5	6	3	7		8
9	2		5	8	
4	3			9	5
	8	9		7	2
2	5		1	6	4
		7	9		
1		8		3	

Fill in all 81 squares on the puzzle with numbers 1 to 9. You can use each number 1-9 only once in each nine square section, in each horizontal line of nine squares, and in each vertical column of nine squares. The puzzle is completed when you correctly fill every square.

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