

# ADAN: Regularly repairs computers at the school

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pressing the back and sides of his head against a padded bar that curves around his noggin. He communicates with Dynavox software that allows him to use his head to pick out letters, numbers and words on a screen attached to his wheelchair. He pieces sentences together one chunk at a time.

“He needs the chair to communicate with the world,” said Irrigon life skills teacher Mark Rouska.

Rouska walked alongside Adan one afternoon this week as the student coaxed his motorized chair down the school hallway. Adan weighed in on the conversation with smiles, eye rolls, head shakes and exuberant exclamations.

Besides Adan’s indomitable attitude, his wheelchair is what will allow him to navigate his classes next year at Blue Mountain Community College when he studies computer technology.

Problem is, the chair is falling apart.

Adan has gotten used to his ride stuttering and stopping at inopportune times. The motorized wheelchair consists of donated parts and pieces cannibalized from other chairs. When it breaks down, Intermountain Education Service District physical therapist Jodi Garberg comes to resurrect the chair.

“She brings special tools, baling wire and duct tape to fix it up,” said Adan’s educational assistant, Cheri Snodgrass. “We’re babying it along.”

Garberg suggested a GoFundMe account and Adan started one to purchase an \$18,250 motorized chair that will allow him to confidently venture out into the community without getting stranded. The account has risen to \$1,125 in a month. The account, at [gofundme.com](http://gofundme.com), is titled “New Power Wheelchair, by Jose Adan Guardado Alberto.”

Rouska has become one of Adan’s biggest advocates. Teacher and student share a bond that is Kryptonite strong. On Rouska’s first day last year at school, he got



Irrigon life skills teacher Mark Rouska and educational assistant Cheri Snodgrass help senior Jose Adan Guardado out of his wheelchair and onto a mat Wednesday at Irrigon High School.

a demonstration of Adan’s playful humor. When the teacher disappeared into the restroom, Adan backed his 300-pound chair to block the doorway.

“I tried to get the door open and couldn’t,” Rouska said. “I heard laughing on the other side.”

Inside Adan’s dysfunctional body, say those who know him, is a kind, super-intelligent, politically astute guy who loves rap music and computers.

Despite Adan’s disability, Rouska said, he regularly repairs computers at the school, develops 3-D videos and recently designed prototypes of logos for the Arlington Public Library. The student’s persistence and joie de vivre amazes Rouska.

“He’s got every right to be mad at the world, but he isn’t,” Rouska said.

That fact struck home with Rouska after he learned he has stage four cancer. In 2013, Rouska beat kidney cancer, but doctors recently found another mass in his lungs. These days, coughing attacks often stop him in his tracks. When that happens, Adan rolls up to Rouska, concern in his brown eyes.

“After a coughing attack, he’s always the first one there to see if I’m okay,”

Rouska said.

After getting the diagnosis, “I was depressed,” Rouska said, “but then I came into my room and saw Adan. If anyone has the right to quit or be upset at the world, it’s him. I felt bad for feeling sorry for myself.”

Rouska describes watching Adan sit on a mat on the floor using his knuckles and superhuman concentration to operate an iPad or seeing him deal with horrible muscle spasms, which cause his hands to cramp and contract.

“This guy can be in a ton of pain and still get his work done,” Rouska said.

Rouska hopes to teach until June, but he has one goal before he goes — to get Adan a new chair.

The teacher also helped last year when Adan got an order from the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service, saying he would be deported back to El Salvador. Rouska and others, worried that Adan would die if he was deported, alerted the offices of Sen. Ron Wyden and Rep. Greg Walden. The deportation order was eventually withdrawn.

This week, Adan, in his quest to become a U.S. citizen, had an interview with an INS representative.

He was granted permanent residency, which is the last step before citizenship. On Thursday, high school students and staff threw him a surprise celebration.

Adan will leave the cocoon of the Morrow County school system at the end of this year. Special needs students are allowed to attend until they are 21 and Adan has reached that age. He has big plans for his future.

With the aid of his Dynavox, Adan said, “I want to be a tech guy or editor of videos.”

“He wants a job,” Rouska said. “He doesn’t want to be a burden on society.”

Jodi Garberg, Adan’s physical therapist, says she is inspired by Adan’s drive, despite all his challenges.

“He’s an amazing, bright kid who is trapped inside his body,” she said.

She expects him to find his way with a little help from his friends.

“What he needs,” she said, “is a new wheelchair that will give him the capability and technologies to access his world, not one that shuts down when he goes over a bump.”

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# TOBACCO: States’s most substantial anti-tobacco effort in nearly two decades

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similar laws of their own.

“We can prevent countless California youth from becoming addicted to this deadly drug, save billions of dollars in direct health care costs and, most importantly, save lives,” said Democratic Sen. Ed Hernandez, who wrote the bill.

The higher age limit, part of a package of anti-tobacco bills, won approval despite intense lobbying from tobacco interests and fierce opposition from many Republicans, who said the state should butt out of people’s personal health decisions, even if they are harmful.

The six bills that passed both houses represented California’s most substantial anti-tobacco effort in nearly two decades, according to the American Cancer Society.

“With California having such a huge population, it’s going to be very impactful nationwide,” said Cathy Callaway, associate director of state and local campaigns for the society.

Advocates noted that the vast majority of smokers start before they are 18, according to data from the U.S. surgeon general. Making it illegal for 18-year-old high school students to buy tobacco for their underage friends will make it more difficult for teens to get the products, they said.

Opponents said American law and custom has long accepted that people can make adult decisions on their 18th birthday and live with the consequences. Eighteen-year-olds can register to vote, join the military, sign legally binding contracts, consent to sex and do just about any legal activity besides buying alcohol.

In response, Democrats changed the bill to allow members of the military to continue buying cigarettes at 18.

“You can commit a felony when you’re 18 years old and for the rest of your life, be in prison,” Assembly Republican Leader Chad Mayes said. “And yet you can’t buy a pack of cigarettes.”

Another bill would classify e-cigarettes, or “vaping” devices, as tobacco products subject to the same restrictions on who can purchase them and where they can be used.

The Food and Drug Administration has proposed regulations for e-cigarettes, but none has taken effect.

Anti-tobacco groups fear that vaporizers are enticing to young people and may encourage them to eventually take up smoking.

“All the progress we’ve made since 1965 to educate people about the hazards of smoking may be for naught as vaping has started a new generation of nicotine junkies that will be helplessly addicted and will ultimately graduate to smoking cancer sticks,” said Sen. Jeff Stone, a Republican.

Others say the devices are a less harmful, tar-free alternative to cigarettes. They have not been extensively studied, and there is no scientific consensus on their risks.

A vaping industry group, the Smoke-Free Alternatives Trade Association, urged Brown to veto the bill, saying in a letter that it could pose problems for vape shops.

“The stigma of being equated with tobacco has many negative consequences,” the group wrote.

The bills would also expand smoke-free areas to include bars, workplace break rooms, small businesses, warehouses and hotel lobbies and meeting rooms. Smoking bans would apply at more schools, including charter schools, and counties would be able to raise their own cigarette taxes beyond the state’s levy of \$0.87 per pack.

# ECHO: Would add, improve 27,900 square feet

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match from local districts — a match that must be made through a local bond.

“You can’t get it any other way,” Smith said. “Their reasoning is that they want the local community invested in it. They want the community to say, ‘This is something we need too.’”

School districts in both Milton-Freewater and Athena-Weston were also awarded grants as part of the program. Each district will ask voters for a bond on the May 17 ballot.

This week, the Echo district launched a public information campaign about the proposal and the bond, which would add or improve 27,900 square feet.

At the top of the list, it would increase school security by adding keypad locks, improve security cameras and move the school’s primary entrance. The current entrance opens into the common area and cafeteria. To reach the front office, visitors must follow signs down steps and a hallway. District staff said it 41 different keys are required to lock every door on the campus.

“This is the only school I know of where there’s not an adult at the door,” Smith said. “You can just walk in.”

The bond also will build for three new classrooms. The small district saw an increase of 35 students this year — an increased enrollment of 22 percent. That required adjustments, such as turning a storage room into a classroom. The district’s preschool classes are across the street from the main building.

In addition to the instructional classrooms, the bond would add designated rooms for wood shop, metal shop, art, agriculture and a science lab. Those extracurricular activities currently share space and Smith compared it to three siblings sharing a room.

“This opens up a lot of

**More online**  
To get a look at Echo schools’ proposed upgrades head online to [www.eastoregonian.com](http://www.eastoregonian.com)

options for our students to do more hands-on learning, more tech learning,” Smith said.

The expansion would allow for the introduction of a “reading room” or the re-introduction of a school library, which Echo currently does not offer. The new spaces would also allow for alternative physical education classes. Currently, the district’s one gym is used for all sports events and practices, all K-12 physical education classes and all assemblies, concerts and performances. District staff said the space is in use constantly from 6 a.m. until 9 p.m. during athletic seasons.

One line from a public presentation this week earned

“This opens up a lot of options for our students to do more hands-on learning, more tech learning.”

— Raymon Smith, Echo School District superintendent

applause from the audience: The new gym would be air-conditioned.

District taxpayers already pay \$2.21 per \$1,000 for an existing bond from 2003, scheduled to expire in 2023. If the new 18-year bond proposal is approved, taxes for Echo property owners would increase to \$3.02 per \$1,000.

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*Tim & Annette Terraberry's*

## Dinner & Auction

**Sunday, March 13th 4:00pm**  
**Hermiston High School Commons**

*Tim is battling Cancer, so please help support this wonderful couple.*

**Doors open 4pm • Tri Tip dinner buffet 5pm**  
**Silent Auction • Tickets \$35**

Tickets may be purchased at the Hermiston Chamber, American West Properties and Oasis Vineyard Church. A table for 8 can be purchased for \$280.

If you have any questions or would like to volunteer, please call or text Nancy Walchli at 541-571-1723.

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