

TAMMY

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She came to Enterprise in 1986 after four years of substitute teaching and coaching volleyball in Arlington, Ore.

That early experience showed her something she hadn't expected — she really enjoyed the classroom.

Crawford was hired in Enterprise by Larry Christman and Bob Eddy for a one-year position to fill in while Elizabeth Oliver was on maternity leave (in those days they took a year-long sabbatical) and took over the fifth grade. The next year her long-time friend Lorri Fischer went home for maternity leave and she took on fourth grade. That temporary teaching position — which eventually led her to math and reading for junior high — just kept stretching right down to the finish line of a 30-year career.

She blames her move to junior high on the late Leo Goebel, who was teaching in Joseph when she was in seventh grade.

"Leo put the Teacher's Curse on me," she said, "He said, 'when you're a teacher, and you will be a teacher, you're going to have students just like you.'"



Kathleen Elynn/Chieftain
Tammy Crawford assists seventh-grader Grace Collins in retrieving work from a thumb drive.

There's something in that course that reverberates in Wallowa County. Enterprise School District has an extraordinary number of teachers who fall into three rare categories: graduated here and came back to have a career here; graduated here and are starting a career here; and graduated from some other very small town and found themselves serving an entire career here.

That's rare. "I don't know anybody outside the county who can equal that," said High School Principal Blake Carlsen. "Let me put this in perspective for you." And he begins naming every teacher and their hometown and career in both the elementary school and high school.

"It's always a privilege to have someone who commits themselves to serving the dis-

trict so long and with such dedication as Tammy Crawford," Carlsen said. "That brings such a consistency and stability to the district. You can really move forward with purpose and direction when you don't have all that turn over. You can develop a real steadfastness — which is real critical to a kid's success."

That stability extends beyond teachers. Carlsen graduated from Enterprise, as did Ken Kunkle, head custodian.

Crawford said almost exactly the same thing in explaining why she stayed so long in one district, through the dark times as the timber industry died, through Measure 5 and the loss of half the staff, through the temporary loss of Secure Rural Schools Act money — through it all, good and bad.

"We have a really close staff," Crawford said. "Our staff is very close-knit and it's a pleasure to work with them and be in a community that cares about their kids' education."

Wallowa County is differ-



4th grade, 1987 - 88

Top row (l to r): Hannah Blanford, Tiffany Rynearson, Melissa Green, Jasmine Railey, Ramon Soto, Amber Follett, Alta Forster. Second row: Booke Bazer, Corey Theabolt, Brian Estes, Cody Bacon, Jiles Michels, Kim Otto, Phillip Evans. Ground level: Sarah Crane, Nellie Bunce, Rebecca Tye, Tina Downing, Dena Rynearson, Katy Kurtz, (me), Charlie Brennan, James Jones

Courtesy photo

A blast from the past shows a young Tammy Crawford, just starting her career with her fourth-grade class at Enterprise.

ent, Crawford said, because of how much parents value a good education. Being a teacher is a respected position in the county — and it's not that way in other places.

"I tell someone in another place I'm a teacher and they ... " She demonstrates a visible

loss of interest and a turning away. "But education is valued here. People become teachers and stay because education is valued here."

Crawford was valued here for who she was in addition to the role she played.

"As a friend she shares much of my school history and has been a loyal, trusted friend," said fellow teacher and friend Lorri Fischer. "She taught my girls and I, her boys. She was full of ideas and energy. Even this past year, she spent hours planning how to best prepare her students for the upcoming assessment tests."

She will be remembered, too, as the woman who began the rocket launch for the fourth grade, a tradition that continues to be the big bang of the year for the kids.

She also was behind a lot of great jokes, Fischer said.

"She adds humor to many conversations in the teachers' room," Fischer said.

Teacher Patty Findley recalls the year Crawford brought a full-sized cardboard cutout of a man to school.

"His name was Earl and he was something to do with encouraging reading, I think," Findley recalled.

Earl began moving and circulated from room to room in different costumes. He showed up in Colby Knifong's room to scare the wits out of her in her first weeks on the job and then he made the mistake of scaring a custodian, who took swift action and tossed Mr. Earl in the garbage.

Crawford's husband Mike retired from teaching in Joseph last year. Now, the two will have time to decide who gets to decide what they'll do each week. In the meantime, the family/Wallowa County teaching tradition continues as their son Kyle Crawford continues his career as a sixth-grade teacher at Enterprise Grade School.

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