

Seventh-day Adventist School teacher calls it a career

Webster retires after 40 years as an educator, including 23 in Enterprise

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Dan Webster sat Friday, June 25, at what is now his old desk in a classroom inside the Enterprise Seventh-day Adventist School. Student desks and chairs were moved to the side. Computers were covered to keep them from gathering dust during the summer.

“It’s hard to think of this as not my classroom anymore,” Webster said. “Still hear the kids’ voices in here (from) down through the years.”

For the last 23 years, that room has been where Webster has taught middle school students that come through the school, students whom he hoped to prepare for the next level of life — academically, physically and spiritually.

Webster, an educator for 40 years total, including in Enterprise since 1998, has decided it’s time to turn the whiteboard over to the next generation of teachers at Enterprise’s Adventist school.

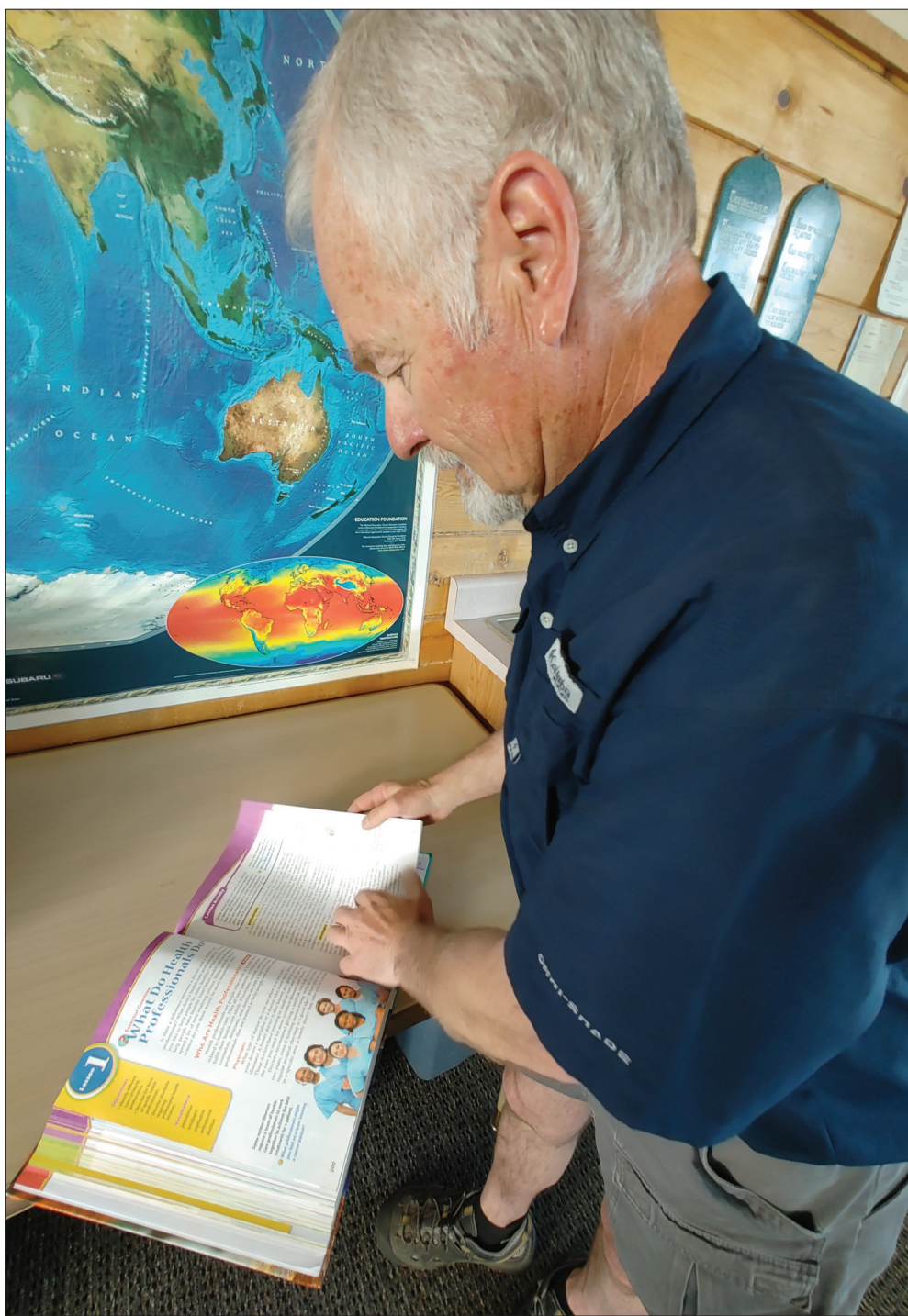
He quipped that teaching a student whose mother he taught previously was perhaps an indicator it was time to retire. All kidding aside, he cited several reasons why it was time, but noted “more importantly is I saw my energy level not being what it used to be. I never wanted to rust out at this job. And I had a really good teacher (working with me). It was her first year here, but she is very organized, so I knew I was leaving things in good hands.”

In his blood, but also called

Both of Webster’s parents at one point in their careers were teachers, but the move into education decades ago, he said, was because of a calling from on high.

“Being a Christian, I felt called to be a teacher, and there were several things in my life that made me feel God had a calling for me — a couple times when I know my life was saved miraculously,” he said. “I was inspired also by a teacher I had in high school. That’s when I first started thinking about it.”

“The doors just seemed to continue to open and point me in the direction of becoming a teacher.”



Ronald Bond/Wallowa County Chieftain

Dan Webster flips through a science book used at the Enterprise Seventh-day Adventist School. Webster, an educator for 40 years, including 23 in Enterprise, has retired from his post.

Webster, who graduated from Walla Walla University with a masters in biology and with chemistry and math minors, was a high school science teacher for 17 years in four different states. He moved to Enterprise in 1997, seeking to take a sabbatical and to spend more time with and to teach his own children — who were reaching high-school age — at home.

“During that year, the school’s number swelled to where they needed help,” he said. “In the winter, beginning of ‘98, I came and worked part time, and they decided to go to two teachers. That’s what kind of led us here. Once we were here, the job opened up. This job opened up, and I felt at that point the Lord had led me to this place. The next year in ‘98 — fall of ‘98 — I went on full time here.”

Among the changes was a move to teaching all subjects as opposed to just sciences, and teaching multiple grades. He largely taught

fifth through eighth graders during his time in Enterprise.

Creation or evolution?

Webster has a very different take from most science teachers on how the universe came to be — a biblical one.

“That’s actually been an area of interest to me, and I’ve spent a lot of time on that,” he said. “I’ve actually developed a series of talks about evolution and creation. Many scientists believe in design. They don’t go out and say ‘God,’ but they say ‘design,’ or ‘intelligent design.’”

He would explain what evolutionists believe to give his students the background knowledge, but then would explain to them the flaws in the theory.

“When you actually start taking a look at it, the statistical possibilities become mind-bending that would have to take place,” he said. “I just did a talk not long ago about how a lot of people are seeing how fine-tuned the universe is, and how many

things had to come together in order to have a livable or habitable planet here.”

One specific example he pointed to is how life began.

“When you look at the Precambrian Explosion in the fossil record, all of a sudden there is lots of different groups represented. And they are complex organisms,” he said. “So the first fossils we have are organisms that are complex. They’re not as complex as us, but they are complex. They are not single-cell organisms.”

“It’s like life all of a sudden went ‘poof,’ and the Precambrian Explosion is the term evolutionists give it. But how do you get the molecules necessary to even make a simple cell? If you think you are going to start with a simple cell — cells aren’t simple. They are extremely complex. The information in them is extremely complex. We continue to learn more about that.”

Part of what handicapped

Charles Darwin, he said, was not knowing what is known today about cell structure.

“Even if all the molecules are in this primordial soup, for them to get together and form the structures of the cell we see today, if you did statistics ... it goes way beyond possibility,” he said.

The soft-spoken Webster has a very strong stance, too, against teaching evolution, and says it gives children no meaning.

“I think it’s almost child abuse to teach evolution to kids, that it’s fact, because (it asks) why are you here? Why is the kid here? There’s no importance, no value,” he said. “I was raised in a Christian home, and always felt I had infinite value because God was willing to die for me. It makes a big difference to kids to have that world view.”

Beyond the theory

Webster taught all subjects, including the Bible, where the intent was telling students who Jesus was.

“We weren’t here necessarily to try and evangelize the kids into our denomination,” he said. “We mainly wanted to use the Bible to introduce them to Christ and help them to understand more of what His character was, and what He was like.”

Some years, the study would be a look at Genesis. Others, it would be an examination of the Gospels.

“This last year we went through the book of John, the life of Christ, His crucifixion and resurrection,” he said.

He said the teaching given at the Adventist school had an impact, even on students who attended and were of a different belief, noting, for example, that students

who were Muslim, Buddhist, Mormon or even of no belief came through the doors.

Several students left the school impacted. He mentioned the change in one student who started attending in the middle of a school year.

“He had been in public school first semester. He was a character. When he didn’t know what to say he would say ‘George Foreman grills.’ But by the time he graduated that year in eighth grade, I remember his mom coming to me in tears saying ‘you made such a difference.’” Webster said, slowing down and tearing up himself as he retold the story. “That’s what it’s about. There’s a lot of kids that it made a difference in them being here. Some of it was socially like that. Some was scholastically — the public school giving up on them.”

He said the biblical principles leave an impact, regardless of belief. And in teaching that is where he found success for four decades, preparing students for what would lie ahead.

“If you teach those Christian values, whether you are a Christian or not, you’ll see changes in kids, and I think a lot of parents — we had a Mormon family that had a number of kids here, five of their kids here,” he said. “She was one that again was in tears and said we are so thankful the school is here for our kids, and that you taught our kids. That makes you feel like your career is a success when you make a difference in kids’ lives. They either accept Christ or have a stronger relationship with Him, they’re well prepared as they go on from there to go onto the next level of education.”

IN BRIEF

Next Brown Bag looks at local health care

JOSEPH — The next installment of the Brown Bag series, scheduled for noon on Tuesday, July 13, at the Josephy Center for Arts and Culture, will focus on health care in Wallowa County, and specifically what is new with the Wallowa Memorial Hospital and Clinics.

“The health care system in Wallowa County has come miles from the 1980s, when Doctors Siebe and Euhus covered everything,

including the emergency room,” a press release from the Josephy Center states, noting that there now are 10 general practice physicians, several nurse practitioners and physician assistants, a surgeon and an orthopedist. There will also be a new clinic in Wallowa in 2022.

This Brown Bag will serve to keep attendees up to speed, asking questions such as “What is the role of the Hospital Foundation?” “How does the hospital relate to the clinics?” “Where do physical therapy and counselling fit in?” and more.

WMH Chief Nursing Officer Jenni Word and new Physicians Assis-

tant Paul Solis will lead the discussion.

Brown Bags are free and open to the public. The event will be live in person, but can also be viewed online.

Contact the Josephy Center at 541-432-0505, or visit josephy.org for more information.

Weekly chess club returns to Josephy Center

JOSEPH — The weekly chess club at the Josephy Center for Arts and Culture is back, starting Thursday, July 8 at the center.

The free club, open to all ages, runs Thursdays from 4-6 p.m.

No experience is necessary.

— Chieftain staff

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