



Polk County Itemizer-Observer

Volume 140, Issue 10 www.Polkio.com March 11, 2015 75¢

Superintendent selected

Johnstone hired to lead Dallas schools

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — The Dallas School District found what it wanted in its next superintendent in Colorado.

Michelle Johnstone, currently the superintendent of Brush School District in Brush, Colo., was offered and has accepted the job as Dallas' new superintendent starting July 1.

Monday's announcement ends a nearly nine-month search to find a new leader after former superintendent Christy Perry left to become the superintendent of the Salem-Keizer School District last summer.

"It's an extremely good fit," said Mike Blanchard, Dallas School Board chair-

man. "A lot of the qualities we were looking for, she had."

Among those qualities was finding "an instructional leader that would work in collaboration with our staff and community," Blanchard said.

Dallas' search involved community members, parents, district staff and the work of a 27-member panel that helped evaluate the 18 candidates who applied for the post. Ten candidates were interviewed and three finalists emerged.

"I think in the end, we found a really good leader who really wants to come to Dallas for what we are about here," Blanchard said. "The conversations with her were all about learning and that spoke volumes."

See SUPERINTENDENT, Page 5A



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer
Michelle Johnstone has accepted an offer to become Dallas School District's next superintendent.

IN YOUR TOWN

DALLAS NEWS

Who killed Marvin Bluebird?
That is the question for the cast of "Burden of Proof" to contemplate — and eventually reveal — when the murder mystery musical takes the stage at LaCreole Middle School on Friday and Saturday.

As for the possible suspects — all with "colorful" names, think "Clue" — this show has more than enough to keep the audience guessing as the collection of strange and shady characters gather for a party at the victim's home on a dark and stormy night.

Could it be the fortune-telling couple, the Greens?

»Page 16A

FALLS CITY NEWS

Small group reading time for first- and second-graders at Falls City Elementary School begins with, not a book, but stretching, singing and dancing.

OK, so it's not that unconventional — the phonics "dance-chant" helps them memorize letter sounds, and the movement is an energy outlet for a naturally fidgety age group.

The best part? Seemingly, the students look forward to literacy song and dance.

Second-grader Allyssa Hurst walked into the library where Falls City reading specialist Suzi Spencer was waiting.

»Page 15A

INDEPENDENCE NEWS

Steve Tillery steps out onto the playground at Independence Elementary School and is bombarded by kindergarteners.

"Look what I can do!" says Kenya Greene, putting a hoola hoop over her head and spinning it around.

She next challenges Tillery, 53, to jump rope with her, which he does, even though the rope was made for someone much shorter than himself.

This will be the last year Tillery will be principal at IES, a post he's held for the last seven years.

He has taken a job as Western Oregon University's director of clinical practices and licensure.

»Page 14A

MONMOUTH NEWS

In a tie-breaking vote by Mayor John Oberst, Barney & Worth Inc. was chosen March 3 to lead Monmouth's community engagement process.

The council was split down the middle between BDS Planning, a firm in Seattle, and Barney & Worth, based in Portland.

Councilman Marshall Guthrie said he liked that BDS representatives didn't come with a lot of preconceived perceptions about the community of Monmouth.

"I thought they had other things going, including a distance from where we've been that would prove vital," Guthrie said.

»Page 3A

POLK COUNTY NEWS

The first Polk County Folklife Festival was all sunshine and smiles on Saturday.

Folklife celebrated the Willamette Valley's varying cultures with music, food and art. It was such a success that organizers are already planning for 2016.

"I think tally through the gate was about 650 attendees," said festival program director Kurt Dugan. "That was about what we were hoping for, so we were really happy with the attendance."

Dugan said including vendors, musicians and festival staff, there were about 1,000 people roaming the Polk County Fairgrounds & Event Center.

»Page 2A

POLK COUNTY PUBLIC SAFETY LEVY DEBATE



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY THE ITEMIZER-OBSERVER
Public safety units throughout Polk County have to work as a team to hold criminals accountable for their actions.

All roads lead to Dallas

When it comes to arrests, it is the county, not the cities, that is responsible for housing, prosecuting criminals

Editor's Note: This is the second in a series of stories looking at issues and topics that surround the Polk County public safety levy that will appear on the May 19 vote-by-mail ballot.

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — The night of Oct. 5, 2014, two men broke into several cars, including a truck, parked on Northwest Denton Avenue in Dallas and grabbed a safe containing a 45 mm pistol.

With their action, the suspects — we will call them "Smash" and "Grab" — started a law enforcement investigation that led to prosecution involving two police agen-



Silbernagel

cies, the Polk County jail, the Polk County District Attorney's Office, Polk County Drug Court and Polk County Community Corrections.

While this was no blockbuster case — in fact District Attorney Aaron Felton described it as "bread and butter" — it is an example of how the public safety departments in Polk County have to work as a team to hold criminals accountable.

"It's very much a system. People don't quite fully get that," said Marty Silbernagel,

community corrections director. "If you have more deputies on the road, that is only one piece. We need (deputy) DAs to prosecute and PO (parole officers) to supervise. If one of those is not there, it's out of whack."

In an effort to keep that system in balance, the Polk County Board of Commissioners has placed a five-year, 45 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value tax levy on the May 19 ballot for voters to consider.

Here's a look at how that system works.

Dallas police, who took the victim's report, was the first member of that team to work the case. Officers lifted fingerprints off the victims'

cars and sent them to the Salem Police Department Crime Lab for analysis.

On Nov. 24, officers were given their first lead when the prints came back as those of Smash. Officers found and questioned him about the gun theft and other car break-ins. He admitted his involvement and also told police about his partner in crime, Grab.

Further interviews revealed the two had taken the pistol and sold it for methamphetamine and cash, with the help of a third suspect we will call "Middleman."

After taking the gun, Smash and Grab hitchhiked to Salem to find Middleman.

See ROADS, Page 5A

THE NEXT 7 DAYS PLANNING FOR YOUR WEEK 	wed Independence Public Library hosts its weekly storytime session for young children and their parents. 10:30 a.m. Free. Rain Hi: 58 Lo: 48	thu Ash Creek Arts Center is hosting a reception for its latest exhibit at MaMere's Bed & Breakfast in Monmouth. 5 p.m. Free. Morning Showers Hi: 66 Lo: 43	fri The music of Radiohead will be featured during a concert by the Western Hemisphere Orchestra at Rice Auditorium. 7:30 p.m. \$1-\$3. Mostly Sunny Hi: 68 Lo: 49	sat The 2015 Rickreall Spring Gun Show is taking place at the Polk County Fairgrounds & Event Center. 8 a.m.-5 p.m. \$6. Rain Likely Hi: 61 Lo: 48	sun Western Oregon takes on Western Washington in a GNAC softball doubleheader scheduled in Monmouth. Noon. \$4-\$6. Showers Hi: 60 Lo: 41	mon The annual membership meeting for the Dallas Area Chamber of Commerce takes place at the Dallas Civic Center. 11:30 a.m. Free. Mostly Sunny Hi: 64 Lo: 42	tue Spring sports have arrived for area high schools, as Perrydale hosts Gaston in nonleague baseball and softball action. 4:30 p.m. Free. Mostly Sunny Hi: 66 Lo: 44
---	--	---	--	--	--	---	---