

# The long road home

*Eola Hills Charter School still working on permanent home following fire*

**By Jolene Guzman**  
The Itemizer-Observer

AMITY — Eola Hills Charter School has high hopes of starting the 2016-17 school year in a permanent location.

By then, it would be almost three years since its school on Bethel Road in Polk County burnt down.

The next year, it found a space to move to on the Ballston Community Hall property off Community Hall Road in Ballston.

The site had plenty of room and is within the boundaries of Eola Hills Charter School's sponsor, Amity School District. In August 2014, the county approved a land use variance with conditions to move the school onto the site.

The school, which serves students in grades one-12, still hasn't gotten final approval for its plan. Al Christensen, the school's board chairman, is hopeful the finish line is in sight.

At first, finding a permanent site looked like it would happen quickly.

In the months after the fire in October 2013, the school moved into five modular buildings on Willamette Education Service District's property in McMinnville. The ESD offered the classrooms to the school for a \$1 apiece if the school could move them.

The Ballston community was supportive, and the school had insurance payments from the fire to cover the cost of moving and preparing the site.

"The plan began to come together," Christensen said.

After those developments, progress slowed while the school developed plans to meet all the conditions outlined in the variance.

Since August 2014, the



**John Hamilton, Eola Hills Charter School's language arts teacher, leads middle-school students through a lesson. Classrooms are the size of large cubicles at the school.**

JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

school has had a "restrictive covenant" established to bind the property's two tax lots; easement adjustments approved; the septic system expanded; made a plan to widen the main access road; parking, driveways and modular unit placements configured and reconfigured; and a fire suppression system installed.

That was just to have plans approved, not to actually hire contractors to move the school to the site and do other improvements to be ready for school in September.

In February, the school submitted its third series of plans, and Christensen stepped in.

Christensen said he would go to one department only to be sent to another as he waded through the compli-

cated and sometimes frustrating process.

"I've never done any of this stuff," he said.

Meanwhile, the school has had to find temporary locations to hold school. Last year, that was Amity Christian Church. The current school year is in a former winery site in downtown Amity.

Christensen said the board considered closing the school last summer. It held an informational meeting for parents and the reaction was immediate.

"The parents came out in such strong numbers and said, 'We will do whatever you need us to do to keep the school alive and please don't close it,'" Christensen recalled. "We revived our enthusiasm."

Polk County Commission-

er Mike Ainsworth said he understands the school's concerns, but also that the plans need to be done correctly.

"It just takes time and this is something that is completely different," he said.

Nicole Wollenweber, the school's director, said she is eager to have a permanent location.

"I just want them to say 'go,' so I can do what I need to do," she said.

She said the former Mia Sonatina Winery in Amity is the fourth location the school has had to use in the last three school years, including the church they used in the weeks after the fire.

Wollenweber said she understands the county has a process to abide by.

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## SCHOOL NOTES

### Chemeketa CC receives stem grant

SALEM — Chemeketa Community College has been awarded a \$152,236 grant from the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Council (HECC) to increase the number of women and under-represented students of color earning a degree or certificate in a stem (science, technology, engineering and math) field.

The grant will pay for advising and mentoring, strategic tutoring, career planning and tracking of student progress for students who are female or students of color enrolling in a computer science, engineering or high-tech manufacturing program.

Currently only 9 percent of those enrolled in those programs are women and 22 percent are minorities. Full-time enrollment at Chemeketa in fall of 2015 was 53.8 percent are female and 34.6 percent are ethnic or racial minorities.

The grant will also pay for a two-day stem event to recruit new students. Participants will build a functioning robot, create a 3-D print and explore how to develop smartphone applications.

### DSD honors Distinguished Educator

DALLAS — Susan Jones, educational assistant at Whitworth Elementary School, was named April's Distinguished Educator. She was presented the award on Friday.



Jones

Kathy Slack, a parent of a child who Jones helped, nominated her for the honor.

Whenever I've asked for help, she is there without question," Slack said. "She is very caring, compassionate, understanding, helpful, an all-around amazing person."

Other students who have worked with Jones agreed, saying: "She is a sensitive caring teacher," and "she is one of the nicest in this school."

The Distinguished Educator Program recognizes "excellence in teaching and learning" in Dallas School District schools.

### Panters raise \$20,000 for Cystic Fibrosis

INDEPENDENCE — The Mr. and Ms. Central Pageant contestants, along with ASBEC students, presented a \$20,000 check to the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation this weekend.

The CHS students were there to support the "Running4Rylee" team at the "Great Strides" event in Corvallis.

The \$20,000 donated was raised from this year's Mr. and Ms. Central Pageant.

## ACADEMIC HONORS

### Costa earns two awards at academy

FRONT ROYAL, Va. — Cadet Senior Master Sgt. Lucas Costa, of Monmouth, a junior at Randolph-Macon Academy received the Annual Daedalian Award on March 24, 2016.

This award, sponsored by Flight No. 4 Virginia Order of Daedalians, is presented to a junior who demonstrates patriotism, love of country and service to the nation.

Costa also has been named to the third quarter president's list for the 2015-2016 school year.

To be named to the President's List, students must earn a grade point average of 4.0 or above for the quarter.

Costa is the son of Cinthia Costa Jones, of Monmouth and Alexandre D T Costa, of Curitiba, Brazil.

### Local students makes dean's list

BEND — Cody Manzi, of Monmouth, and Cody Johnson, of Independence, were named to the winter term dean's list at Central Oregon Community College.

The list is based on enrollment in 12 or more credits.





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