

Eola Hills settles into new home

Charter school has a permanent location, but is short on paying for the move

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

BALLSTON — Eola Hills Charter School has something it hasn't had in three years: a permanent home.

Students and teachers at the school settled into the new site on the Ballston Community Center property in Ballston in September, starting school a week late.

After years of temporary locations, where teachers would have to set up and clean up their rooms each week, having a space all their own is a relief. Following a fire that destroyed Eola Hills' original site, the school has spent years in a church, on an education service district campus, and a former winery.

Eola Hills now has five modular buildings, four for classrooms and one for an office, lunch room and staff room. Compared to last year, when classrooms were only separated by cubicle partitions, having full walls between classes has allowed instructors to teach more material with fewer distractions.

Nicole Wollenweber, the school's executive director, said students and staff are able make their classes their own.

"It's wonderful," said Wollenweber. "It's the simple things, like decorating for the holidays, that we haven't been able to do in three years."

Eola Hills managed to keep its enrollment full in the three years, a testament to what Wollenweber said is "the need for this kind of school."

The charter school strives to offer an environment where students who struggled in other schools can succeed.

That's worked for junior Wrenna Lindsley, who said she had a difficult time in school in Dayton. She has



Students at Eola Hills Charter School listen to a science lesson on Monday. The school reopened in its new site last month after three years in temporary locations.

JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

You can help

Eola Hills Charter School has set up a gofundme.com account to help pay for costs of opening its new site in Ballston. For more information or to donate to the school: <https://www.gofundme.com/eolahills>.

attended Eola Hills since before the fire, said it's been worth it, even with all the moving and uncertainty.

"It's a really nice school," she said. "If you are having a hard time, come here. They know what to do."

Securing the Ballston site took far more time than school leaders had hoped it would, and there's still plenty of work to be done and bills to pay for the school.

Wollenweber said the school is expecting insurance reimbursement from the fire, but that will fall short about \$50,000 from



EHCS uses five modular buildings for classes and an office.

JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

what it needs to pay contractors for setting up the Ballston site. She said the insurance payment has been delayed, and contractors have been trying to collect overdue payments.

She said EHCS is fundraising for the \$50,000 and is exploring more resources for other needs, such as repairing the seams on the modular buildings

after the move. Now, the seams on the floor are covered in duct tape.

"We will try to get some grants," she said.

Meanwhile, students are happy with their new school home.

"It nice not to have to ask, 'Where is the school?' Or 'when will the school be finished?'" said junior Austin McMurray.

SCHOOL NOTES

Larios is distinguished educator

DALLAS — LaCreole Middle School sixth-grade teacher Teresa Larios was named Distinguished Educator for September during a class assembly at the school.



Larios

Amy McFarland, colleague at LaCreole, nominated her for the honor saying: "She always goes above and beyond for her students" and "she is calm and patient."

Larios' students agreed, adding: "She is the best teacher ever," and "she is very encouraging."

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

Western names two to board of trustees

Itemizer-Observer staff report

MONMOUTH — Western Oregon University's Board of Trustees held its fall 2016 board meeting on Oct. 26.

Two new trustees were introduced. Kelsee Martin joined as the trustee designated from the WOU student body, and Rep. Betty Komp will join the board in January 2017, after retiring from Oregon's House of Representatives.

Marshall Guthrie, director of the Student Enrichment Program, was reappointed as the trustee designated from the WOU staff.

Martin, of Prineville, is pursuing a degree in exercise science at WOU with a minor in human biology, specifically focusing on pre-physical therapy.

Her anticipated graduation date is June 2018. Martin is a member of the PLUS (Peer Leaders Understanding Students) Team at WOU and also enjoys participating in Western's Ambassador Program.

Her board term will conclude June 30, 2018.

Komp earned her bachelor's degree from WOU in 1990. After graduation, she began teaching at Woodburn High School and eventually became assistant principal. Komp ran for office 12 years ago and won a seat in Oregon's House of Representatives in House District 22. Her term on the board officially starts Jan. 10, 2017, and concludes June 30, 2019.

The board also voted to approve both the fiscal year 2017 initial budget and the fiscal year 2017 first quarter management report.

A major topic of discussion at the meeting surrounded WOU's current strategic planning process.

The university plans to bring a strategic plan to the board for action at the January 2017 meeting. WOU officials want feedback from the community and will hold a town hall forum on Nov. 16 from 6 to 7 p.m. in the Richard Woodcock Education Center's Pastega Conference Room (room 101).

Community members are encouraged to bring suggestions, ideas and questions. Free parking is available in Lot I (behind Hamersly Library). For more information about strategic planning and to read the current draft, visit wou.edu/planning.

For more information about the board, visit wou.edu/board.

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