

Big changes at Prairie City School

Increasing enrollment, new teachers, many completed projects greet students

Blue Mountain Eagle

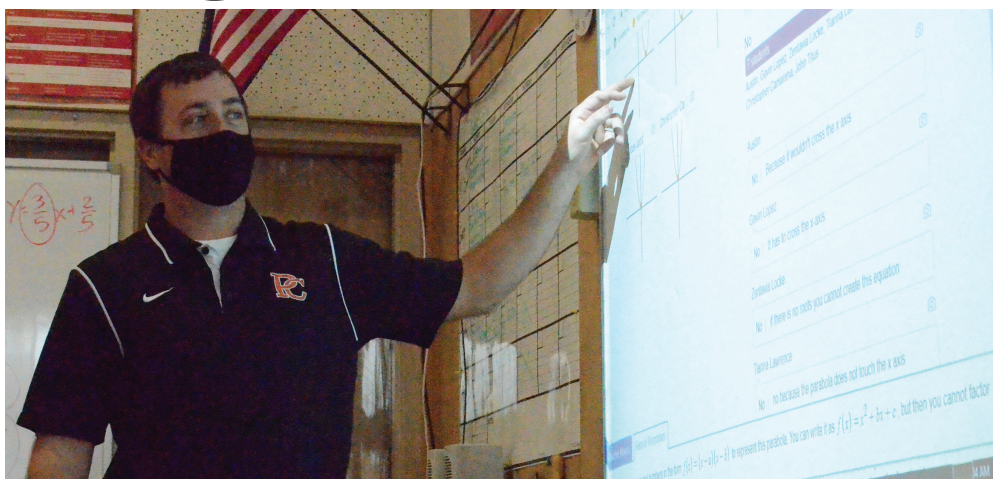
Students returning to Prairie City School found many new upgrades this year — and met more classmates.

Prairie City School Superintendent Casey Hallgarth said students are back in class with “even more positive energy.” He said enrollment has been going up. When he started in the fall of 2019, he said enrollment was 133, and it’s now at 210.

“I honestly think it is because of the relationships and trust we have all built together here,” he said.

New teachers have also joined the staff, and the school now has a seventh- through 12th-grade principal.

Billy Colson, a teacher and athletic director, took on the additional duties as principal.



Eagle file photo

Billy Colson, a math teacher and athletic director at Prairie City School, will add the additional duties of seventh- through 12th-grade principal this year.

He will still be teaching two upper-division math classes but has four periods per day to work as principal, Hallgarth said.

“We decided to add the principal position to Prairie City because of our enrollment these past three years,” Hallgarth said. “We have a great relationship, and we see most everything through the same lens.”

Sharon Fritsch will be teaching kindergarten through

12th-grade Spanish, building on the Spanish lessons taught in the school’s all-day pre-school program.

“The students love her, and she does a great job building relationships with all students and staff,” Hallgarth said. “She will build this program to be top notch.”

The school also hired Jake Lopez as a computer and technology teacher. He will be teaching a coding, web and three-dimensional printer

class along with basic and advanced computer classes, Hallgarth said.

Prairie City School completed a variety of projects over the summer. Hallgarth said they installed a new reader board, a new sound system for the high school gym, new playground equipment, new floors in two classrooms and the high school gym foyer, mini-split HVAC units throughout the school, in-ground sprinklers at the



Eagle file photo

Prairie City School.

baseball and softball field, new elementary school sidewalks, an updated camera system and a new office for the secretary and principal.

He said they repainted the elementary school gym, and the remodel on the Bates building is coming along with a vapor barrier underneath and a new roof with gutters.

“These past two years have been tough, but I have learned a lot about the resiliency of our staff, students and community,” he said. “This is

what keeps me motivated and going. There is nothing like seeing these students in the hallways and joking around with them, seeing them smile and hearing them laugh.”

Hallgarth extended thanks to the school staff and community for support throughout the pandemic.

“There are times when the light gets more and more dim,” he said, “but we all know that we have to keep the fight up and advocate for our school and community.”

Dayville School features new renovations, administration

New football coach and part-time science and ag teacher start this year

Blue Mountain Eagle

School is back in session in Dayville with a new superintendent at the helm.

New Dayville School Superintendent Brandon Haberly said enrollment is currently at 58 students in kindergarten through 12th grade.

“Students are back in the building,” he said. “There is excitement both for students and staff to all be here. We have a newly renovated school and new administration. This is our first week back in school, and our focus has been on care and connection.”

The school has a new part-time science and agriculture teacher in Liz Lovelock, who will also help with the AG program, he said.

“Liz has graciously offered to help until we find a science/ag teacher,” he said.

Haberly said the school is exploring the option of restarting its school garden. It would be a partnership with the third- through fifth-grade class under the instruction of Carrie Sullivan and middle and high school agriculture students.

The school also has a new head football coach, Tim Auty, who coached his first home game Friday. The first home volleyball game is the newly renovated gym is at 4 p.m. Sept. 14 versus Grant Union’s junior varsity team, he said.



File photo

This photo from last year shows renovations nearly complete at Dayville School. New Superintendent Brandon Haberly said students and staff are excited to be back in session.

Haberly said the school is also looking to see if any other communities would be interested in an elementary co-ed flag football program. He said Dayville could field a kindergarten through second-grade team and a third- through fifth-grade team. If people are interested, he said to give him a call at 541-987-2412, ext. 103.

Monthly school board meetings are

held the second Tuesday of each month in the school computer lab, and the school is working to livestream those meetings within the next two months. Haberly said links will be posted on the school website, dayvilleschools.com.

Job openings are also posted there, he said, currently including an assistant for the Early Learning Center and a bus driver.

Blue Mountain Land Trust purchases property outside of Prairie City

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Blue Mountain Land Trust purchased a 278-acre parcel outside of Prairie City.

With help from the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and financing from Craft3, a regional nonprofit, the organization purchased Phipps Meadow, according to an Aug. 11 press release.

The press release noted that the Malheur National Forest surrounds the “ecologically diverse” property and is composed of wetland meadow, pine forest and sits on a mile and a half of the John Day River. The press release states it is an important ecological feature for wildlife and native fish in the region.

“Phipps Meadow is a remarkable property in the headwaters of the Middle Fork John Day River. The John Day River basin contains one of the last entirely wild runs of salmon and

steelhead in the Columbia River Basin. This section of the river provides critical habitat for wild spring Chinook salmon, mid-Columbia summer steelhead, bull trout, redband trout, pacific lamprey, and a host of other native non-salmonid fishes,” said Amy Charette, watershed restoration coordinator with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs John Day Basin office.

Alyssa Martinez Neumann, Blue Mountain Land Trust’s communications and marketing specialist, told the Eagle that the acquisition of the land is just the beginning of the project.

Martinez Neumann said the land trust is just starting to meet with technical conservation stakeholders in the next couple of months to look at what land use would look like in the future.

“Something to remember with these types of projects is that it’s a multi-year project,” she said. “It’s a marathon.”

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