

# Sande Brown, leader and student advocate, to embark on new course

By Katherine Lacaze  
EO Media Group

It is a typical midweek morning, and Seaside Heights Elementary School Principal Sande Brown is stationed at her habitual post outside the main entrance to smile, wave and converse with students as they disembark from buses and cars and trek into the building.

"The best part of the day is greeting kids as they come to school," she says.

During the past two and half decades, her place — the place she worked, loved, invested her time and developed professionally and personally — has been in the halls of Seaside School District schools. After the 2015-16 school year, the curtains will close on that stage of her life when she retires.

Reflecting back on her career, Brown said, "I think the thing I've enjoyed the most is working with children and families to make their lives better, and that could be in a variety of ways."

With emotion, she explained her role of guiding students and working alongside families as they wrestle with various issues and challenges and successfully come out the other side.

It is evident the time has come for retirement, she laughed, "When you get sentimental about things like that."



KATHERINE LACAZE/FOR CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

**Seaside Heights Elementary School Principal Sande Brown greets students as they arrive for school. Brown is retiring after the 2015-16 school year.**

According to Superintendent Doug Dougherty, "Through her inspiring leadership and advocacy for students, a culture of learning and growth has been established throughout Sande's career."

In March, Brown officially gave her notice of retirement, effective June 30, and the Seaside School District Board of Directors accepted the notice. Broadway Middle School Principal John McAndrews will be the new principal at the Heights, while Broadway Middle School Assistant Principal Robert Rusk will fill in for McAndrews.

As for Brown, she looks forward to having additional time for her recreational pas-

times, such as kayaking, hiking and skiing. However, she also imagines both she and her husband, Mike Brown, who also is retiring from Seaside High School this year, will want to continue working part-time or investing some hours into education.

Education was not Brown's original career choice. She first received a degree in parks and recreation from Central Washington University. She planned to settle down in central Washington.

Brown started her tenure in the Seaside School District as an English and journalism teacher at the high school in 1990. She also oversaw the high school's yearbook and

news magazine, worked in alternative education and helped establish and coach the high school's swim team.

In 2002, Brown was hired as the assistant principal at Broadway Middle School. The following year, she maintained a portion of that role while also serving as principal of Gearhart Elementary School.

Brown was the principal of both Gearhart Elementary and the Cannon Beach Elementary School in 2005, before serving solely as the Gearhart principal starting in 2007.

She finished making her rounds of the Seaside schools when she became the principal at the Heights in 2014. In fact, she said, her one "claim to fame" is having worked at every school in the district. In 2014 former Cannon Beach students were assimilated into Seaside Heights Elementary School.

Having served as the Cannon Beach principal and knowing many of the students and their families, Brown felt poised to lead the two schools' merging. "I wanted to be here to help bring everybody together," she said.

From Brown's perspective, the interactions she shares with fellow educators, students and their families are rewarding for herself, as well. "I learn every day from my kids and their parents and my staff," she said.



DANNY MILLER/EO MEDIA GROUP

**Jaxson Smith waits outside before the start of the Seaside High School graduation ceremony Monday.**

## Graduates pause, reflect

Graduates from Page 1A

"All of us have faced challenges, whether with school life, social life, home life or not knowing if there was going to be food on the table for dinner tonight, the Class of 2016 has faced it all," Barnes said. "Not only did we persevere, many of us went on to accomplish things well beyond our years."

"This is a wonderful and special class," Sheila Roley, the school's principal, said. "They are bright, kind, compassionate, caring group of young people and they have worked very hard. The road through high school is not an easy one. We put high bars in front of our students and yet here they all are."

"We push our limits because we are the Seaside centennials and we are grateful for those who molded us into who we are today," salutatorian Whitney Westerholm said. "You are the reason behind the success of our class, and we will forever be in debt to

this community."

After the awarding of diplomas, students popped confetti and threw hats in the air as family and faculty proudly clapped, whistled and cheered.

Senior class president and valedictorian Alie Zagata, who created the Seaside High School centennial celebration, asked her fellow students to hold onto their unique personalities as they enter the "big, wide world."

Salutatorian Isabella Curcin encouraged students to experience the world's wonders through travel and language learning.

Valedictorian Cosma Davis said the class was on the cusp of "our biggest adventure yet" and advised students to let love help guide their decisions when facing newfound freedom and options.

"We're amazing and intelligent human beings," valedictorian Kyna Lin said. "Don't ever let anyone tell you differently."

## Fire Mountain school reopens after a refresh

By Lyra Fontaine  
Cannon Beach Gazette

The New School at Fire Mountain is now enrolling for the next school year after closing for a year.

"The school needed to reboot," Faith Deur, the school board's president, said. "We needed a year to reorganize and get people re-energized."

After the closing of Cannon Beach Elementary School in 2013, Fire Mountain is an option for families in town seeking an alternative to Seaside public schools.

The independent school, located in Arch Cape, will continue to use the Oregon Coast as a "living laboratory." Located near Oswald West State Park and the recently designated Cape Falcon Marine Reserve, the school allows students to experience the local environment, Deur said. Children are encouraged to spend time outdoors and play in nature.

First-through-fourth grade classes are filling up, Deur said. The school draws students from across the north Oregon Coast.

This fall, new teacher Kate Romanov, from Nehalem, will bring her experience with place-based learning and social-emotional development to the school's elementary grades. Romanov has a background in environmental sustainability and a master's degree in education. She previously taught in Oregon and California.

The school is still searching for a preschool and kindergarten teacher.

Fire Mountain's interdisciplinary curriculum focuses on students' emotional and academic growth, creativity and environmental awareness.

Besides the core curriculum, the school plans to hold weekly group meetings with students to discuss goals, answer questions and resolve disputes.

Parents built the school building during the 1980s.

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