

COMMUNITY

Custodian a backbone of Rocky Heights Elementary

Powney helps keep school running

BY MAEGAN MURRAY
HERMISTON HERALD

When something breaks or a student throws up on the floor at Rocky Heights Elementary School, Tracy Powney is the first one on scene to remedy the situation. Powney is the school's lead custodian, and although she often finds herself in what the average person wouldn't consider glamorous situations, she is proud that she provides a service to her fellow staff members at Rocky Heights.

"It makes me happy," she said about her job. "I like when a staff member needs something done. I can come out and get them whatever they need."

Powney didn't always see herself doing custodial work, however. Powney actually went to school to become an executive secretary after high school. After landing a job in that field, however, she quickly discovered it wasn't for her.

"I did that for about six weeks and realized that I didn't like it," she said. "It was too much. I couldn't keep things straight. I would get nervous on the phone. It was all very overwhelming for me."

After quitting that job, she decided to explore a career where she could receive the same type of benefits, while also giving her a little more



Tracy Powney, the lead custodian at Rocky Heights Elementary School, cleans a window Thursday afternoon at the school. Powney was recognized as this year's Classified Employee of the Year for RHES.

wiggle room both physically and mentally.

At the time, Powney's brother worked as a school custodian, and she thought the field might be a good fit for her, as well. She said she had no idea at the time it would develop into a full career.

Powney said she applied and started subbing for Hermiston School District for two years before getting a permanent position as the night custodian at Highland Hills Elementary School.

While she enjoyed it, she said working the swing shift at HHES got to be increasingly difficult over the course of seven years. She would go to work at 3 p.m. and wouldn't get home un-

til 11:30 p.m., which made it difficult to keep up on her two sons' lives and school work, who were in elementary school at the time.

"I lost out on some things," She said. "It was hard to work swing and make sure they were getting their home work done as a single mom. I just kind of had to do the best I could."

When a job opened up for a day custodian at Rocky Heights, however, Powney applied and got the job, which she said she thoroughly enjoys.

Powney's days start early in the morning. Each day, she wakes up at 4 a.m. and arrives at the school by 6:30 a.m. She then gets started on some of her daily duties, in-

cluding unlocking the building and cleaning the computer lab, library and conference room, as well as taking down the tables for student breakfast in the morning.

By 7 a.m., she is in the lunch room helping to monitor students, before carrying on with the rest of the duties she has lined up for that day. In addition to sweeping the walks and washing the windows, Powney said she usually has a list of jobs that teachers have asked her to complete, such as replacing a paper towel ream to unclogging a toilet.

Powney said she only occasionally deals with some of the more unpleasant tasks like cleaning up vomit or feces. She said she doesn't



Sitting on the desk of Tracy Powney, Rocky Heights Elementary School lead custodian, is her Classified Employee of the Year award, which she earned this year for excellence in her job.

let the negatives of the job overwhelm what she knows to be a career spent with a variety of great fellow staff members.

"I don't normally let it get to me," she said. "I just put myself into what I call custodial mode. I try not to think about what it is. I just clean it up and move on to the next thing."

While she doesn't enjoy doing those types of services, she said she knows she is appreciated. This year, Powney was one of the classified employees of the year recognized in the Hermiston School District. Powney said the honor came to her as a complete surprise.

"I didn't expect it at all," she said.

Powney said while she receives compliments from teachers and other staff members about the work she does, she had no idea people were recognizing how much effort she puts into her job.

"Being a custodian and kind of low on the totem pole, I guess you never realize that people notice all that work that you put in," she said. "Sometimes, you're just kind of in with the wood work, but I was excited when I heard I had been named a classified employee of the year. It feels good to be recognized for all your hard work."

Powney said what many staff members may not realize is that she enjoys when they request her service. She said she enjoys helping staff members' so they can keep doing their own jobs. In some ways, she said, she keeps the building running so everyone else can complete what they need to do.

"If there is a carnival or a bazaar coming up, I can arrange things for teachers and other staff members," she said. "I really enjoy it. It makes me feel good to help other people."

NEWS IN BRIEF

HHS seeking volunteer judges

Hermiston High School is seeking volunteers to be judges for the speech and debate district tournament on April 11.

As a judge, people will be in a classroom with three to six students competing in the same event. Judges listen to their speeches, fill out a ballot assessing how well they did based on the prompts provided and then rank them in order of who did the best that given round.

The tournament will be held at Armand Larive Middle School. The tournament's first round will begin at 8 a.m. Judges should be there by 7:30 a.m. for a judges' meeting, where a detailed set of instructions for each event will be provided. Judging will go un-

til 4 p.m. No experience is required to volunteer to be a judge.

Judges will be receiving food from Bulldog Catering. Breakfast items and lunch will be provided at no cost to the volunteers.

The event will require between 50 and 75 judges. To sign up, contact Kate Podlesnik at 541-310-0851.

Hermiston School District to host district-wide concert

The Hermiston School District will hold a district-wide concert beginning at 7 p.m. Tuesday in the HHS main gym.

The event brings together choirs and bands from both middle schools, as well as the high school choir and band classes. A piece with all students is

performed at the end.

The event is free to all who are interested in attending.

Desert Arts Council presents 'Searching for Aztlan'

The Desert Arts Council brings a new play to Hermiston that features a bilingual "biting and satirical journey" of a script that focuses on lost culture and identify.

The play "Searching for Azatlan" will begin at 7 p.m. April 17 in the Armand Larive Middle School auditorium.

On April 15, the Milagro theater group, which is putting on the play, will hold a free workshop and com-

munity dinner. The event will run from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Hermiston Library in the Lantham Room. People will explore cultural identity through movement and metaphor with Milagro's actors and other community members.

For more information, call the Desert Arts Council at 541-720-3859 or visit the Milagro website at www.milagro.org.

Administrative Professionals Day luncheon planned for April 28

The Hermiston Chamber of Commerce is hosting an Administrative Professionals Day Luncheon

beginning at 11:45 a.m. at the Hermiston Conference Center.

This year's entertainer is Sharon, who has been a radio deejay, television news producer and is a national award-winning teacher. At the age of 50, she decided to try a new career as a stand-up comedian. She now performs in comedy clubs all over the world.

In addition to the entertainment, the chamber will be recognizing its nomi-

nated professional assistants from area businesses, crowning one of them as the 2015 Professional Assistant of the Year. Nomination forms for the effort must be submitted by Friday.

Tickets to the event cost \$18 and are available at the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce office. For more information, call 541-567-6151. To purchase tickets online, visit www.hermistonchamber.com.



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*We want to thank everyone
for the calls, prayers, food,
donations, flowers and cards
for the loss of my son and
our brother Wes Copeland,
who passed away on
December 31, 2014.*

Copeland Family



Friends of
**LINIS
ROZEMA**
are invited to
90th Birthday Party
Saturday, April 11, 2015
1:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Hermiston Christian Center
1825 West Highland Avenue
Hermiston, Oregon
Questions? Call 541-314-5416

**Blue Mountain
Community College**

Student Spotlight: Did You Know?



**Kevin Hawman
Hermiston
BMCC Precision Irrigated Ag Student**

Kevin grew up on his family's farm in Hermiston, and when he got to BMCC, he wanted the precision irrigated agriculture program to have its own pivot. Ever the go-getter, Kevin was able to raise more than \$60,000 in donations towards a new pivot. He then worked with Valley Irrigation to obtain a \$30,000 discount on the pivot's price. Valley Irrigation was so impressed with Kevin's tenacity that its leadership invited Kevin to Omaha, Nebraska, to see Valley's headquarters in person earlier this month. BMCC is proud to call Kevin one of its outstanding students!

Have you heard about the BMCC bond?

BMCC wants to continue to provide a high-quality education for students so they can succeed like our many distinguished alumni! Check out the bond page on our website to learn more about how BMCC could continue to provide an affordable education for family-wage jobs, a safe and secure learning environment and protect the community's investment. Look for the bond on the May 19, 2015, ballot!

www.bluecc.edu/about-bmcc/bond-measure

BMCC is an equal opportunity employer and educator.



**Attention Parents:
Don't Miss the Bus!**

Join us **Thursday, April 23**
from **6-8 pm**
OR
Saturday, April 25
9:30-11:30 am
at **Sunridge Middle School**
Sign-up Now!
Space is Limited!
Register at
www.readyforkindergarten.org

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Questions? E-mail tcrfopendleton@gmail.com
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