

# BERGSTROM:

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stitute teacher assistant and then was hired four years later as a temporary, full-time special education assistant, which later became a full-time position. Eight years ago, the physical education teacher retired and new P.E. instructor Todd Sprong advocated hiring a female assistant, who would be able to supervise the girls in their locker room and help address their needs. Bergstrom assumed that role.

"Back then, you knew all of the kids. You knew most of their parents," Bergstrom said.

As physical education assistant, she monitors student attendance, helps with discipline, helps lead activities and records physical testing results on a spreadsheet.

She is also a valuable liaison to the girls who may not feel comfortable discussing certain things with Sprong, such as female issues.

"I think I'm more counselor, too, than anything," Bergstrom said. "You know, I'm just there for them. If they need something, I usually have it."

Bergstrom said she enjoys

that aspect of her job.

"Because sometimes they still need that at this age," she said. "The need someone to help them out."

Bergstrom said a downside of current physical education classes is they are electives, so not all students take P.E. On the other hand, Bergstrom said, the children who are there generally want to be there and enjoy coming.

"Here, we see kids in a different light than the teachers do," Bergstrom said, adding classroom teachers have different expectations. "We want the kids to move and be active. The kids get to kind of cut loose with us."

Of course, Bergstrom said, students are a lot different now than they were 25 years ago when she first entered the classroom. First, she said, students are a lot more open about the kind of things they say to her and Sprong.

"They share a lot of things with us that we don't necessarily want to hear," she said. "Too much information. On the other hand, I'm glad they share that with us because we know that we've made a connection that they want to share with us."

Of all the jobs she's had in the school district, she's



JESSICA KELLER PHOTO

**Armand Larive Middle School physical education assistant Michele Bergstrom watches as students play volleyball during class Tuesday. Bergstrom will end her 25-year career in the Hermiston School District on a high note. She was selected as one of the school district's classified employees of the year last fall and recently learned she will be honored with a Crystal Apple Award.**

enjoyed her current one the most.

She said she has always had a good relationship with Sprong, and they enjoy what they do.

"We treat each other like brother and sister," she said.

She said she and Sprong laugh all day long and have fun with the students. She said they try to arrange activities students don't usually get to participate in during physi-

cal education classes, such as archery.

"If we're not having fun as instructors, then they're not having fun," Bergstrom said.

Sprong said Bergstrom has been extremely valuable through the years as an assistant and working with the students.

"You can't even put a price on it," he said. "She gets athletics and activities, which is cool."

He said, while she acts

like a second mother to the girls, she cares about the boys just as much, adding she'll spend her own money to get them things they need, such as shoes. She also will go to their athletic events.

He said just recently she attended a few of her students Little League games and then congratulated them when she saw them in class.

"She'll do anything," Sprong said.

Bergstrom said one of the best parts of her job is seeing the enjoyment school brings to students who don't have a lot to look forward to at home.

"They've made me look at life a little differently," she said.

Bergstrom has also enjoyed watching her students grow and seeing them when they are in high school and in college, which is rewarding to her. Occasionally, Bergstrom said, some of the college students come to her house in the summer and play cards. Others have children in her classes.

Bergstrom said, however, that she has been with the school district long enough and is old enough that she has decided to retire. She said when she first started as Sprong's assistant, they agreed they would retire the same year, and the time has come.

She said she wants to spend more time with her granddaughters, as well as working in her yard, but she will miss many aspects of her job.

"I'm gonna miss the kids when I retire, that's for sure," she said. "Whoever gets my job is going to have the best job ever," she said.

# CENTER:

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ence center while also helping fund the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center when it opens.

Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan said the city currently pays the chamber \$64,350 to operate the conference center and about \$25,000 in utilities and insurance costs, for a total of \$90,000 each year. After adding in the revenue generated by the center, he said the facility has been operating with an average net loss of about \$50,000 annually.

Morgan said the city is committed to paying at least \$50,000 toward the operation of EOTEC when it opens in spring of 2016, and city officials must consider whether or not to subsidize two separate event spaces.

Mayor Dave Drotzmann said Monday's decision was only to extend the status quo for now to allow for further deliberation.

"We've had a couple brief meetings with the Chamber of Commerce now to talk about the future of the Hermiston Conference Center, and it's just still in its infancy stages," he said. "We're still trying to flesh out the details, but it was our belief that they needed a little reassurance that there was going to be

an opportunity for them to continue as the operator of the Hermiston Conference Center, as they're trying to book events at least a year in advance."

Councilwoman Jackie Myers agreed more deliberation is needed to determine a final plan for the facility.

"There's a lot of moving pieces to this, and we just don't have a good recommendation for it yet," she said. "We need to do a lot more research and gather the facts before anybody can make a good decision on it."

Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors Chairman Joe Franell said extending the current contract will reassure not only the chamber, but also the members of the community who utilize the center. He said he appreciated the thoughtful approach proposed.

"The Chamber of Commerce board applauds the idea of being deliberate about 'What do we do with this facility?'" he said. "... It's not a City Council asset. It's a community asset, and (we applaud) engaging the community in discus-

sions about 'What happens with that? What's the best use of that facility? Do we keep it up? Do we repurpose it? Do we sell it? Do we repurpose it? And we're excited to be part of that discussion."

Morgan said the city purchased the entire current site for about \$550,000 in 1994, and after, a city committee raised \$600,000

from the community for renovations.

Drotzmann said he respected the time and money the community has invested in the "great community center." He said, although the city would research all options, including selling the property, the community will be involved in the process.

In other City Council

news, City Attorney Gary Luisi recommended changes to a proposed contract to name Anderson Perry & Associates, La Grande, as the city's engineers of record. The council did not approve the agreement, and City Manager Byron Smith said he would look into modifying the contract and bring something back at a future meeting.

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