

Local 2015 Crystal Apple Award winners

Hermiston School District
Michele Bergstrom
Debara Cleaver
Lisa McElroy

Kristi Smalley
Umatilla School District
Elisabet Flores
Lisa Keller
Jerry McMichael
Stanfield School District
Heather Monkus
Don Walker
Echo School District
Mike Heriza
Pam Reese

APPLE:

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media specialist, she knew she could continue to help children in that role.

"I think one of the things that has really helped me coming from the classroom is knowing the librarian needs to be there to support literacy," Smalley said.

Although she said most of her experience in the media specialist field came from on-the-job training, her work, as attracted the notice of others. Smalley said she was excited and surprised to learn she will receive one of the Inter-Mountain Education Service District Crystal Apple "Excellence in Education" Awards May 20 in Pendleton.

"It's great to have the recognition," she said.

She said her biggest rewards, however, come from the students, who are always happy to see her because they know she is there to help, and from the teachers, who regularly thank her for the work she does by supporting their efforts in the classroom.

"Every day I wake up excited to be at work," she said. "I've never been bored once. I just wish everyone could have that kind of career."

Not that Smalley has much time to be bored; her days in the schools are always busy.

Not only does she help students find the books that

meet their needs, she also is in charge of each of the elementary school book fairs and making sure the books in each of the libraries are appropriate and interesting to students and, most importantly, are being read.

She also spends a fair amount of her time working with students: making sure they are finding books in their reading level, as well as listening to them read.

"A lot of people would think I look a lot like a reading teacher sometimes," Smalley said, adding it is ridiculous to think she would stop teaching just because she is not in a classroom. "Sometimes the best thing I can do is just listen to them read, and the teachers appreciate that. Sometimes it's the best use of my time."

She said she couldn't do all the things she does, however, without her five library assistants, who are in charge of day-to-day operations at the libraries — filing books and checking them out to students.

Smalley said last year, between the elementary schools, 145,000 books were checked out, and this



JESSICA KELLER PHOTO

Hermiston elementary school media specialist Kristi Smalley, right, talks with Rocky Heights Elementary School library assistant Misti Thompson in between sessions with students recently. Smalley has been an educator for 33 years, 21 as a media specialist.

year, with about a month of school left, students have borrowed more than 125,000 books, and she is confident they'll meet last year's record.

Smalley is also proud of all the work she does coordinating Battle of the Books teams — where students read a list of books given to them through the state organization and then are quizzed on them at various competitions.

"That's another great way to encourage reading," Smalley said.

She said it's a lot of fun for her, as well, and compares her role to the host of the popular game show "Jeopardy."

"I just love being Alex Trebek — you know, running the matches, asking the questions. He's my idol," Smalley said.

Umatilla teacher to receive Crystal Apple Award posthumously

Elisabet Flores, the Umatilla teacher who died in a car crash in Hermiston April 11, will receive an Inter-Mountain Education Service District 2015 Crystal Apple "Excellence in Education" Award at the annual ceremony May 20 in Pendleton. Flores taught at McNary Heights Elementary School for eight years as a first-grade teacher. Flores was instrumental in bridging the gap between Hispanic families and the school district and had re-started an after-school reading class for her students who needed help prior to her death.

UTILITIES:

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"We are taking some more steps forward to better understand the

costs of a natural gas system," Smith said Tuesday. "... I think it will give us an opportunity to solidify another one of the utilities that service that area to help us be ready for almost any kind

of development there." Smith said he is excited about the possibilities and will seek further direction on how to proceed from the City Council at the next meeting Monday.

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