

# Smith leaving for Walla Walla superintendent's job

## Deputy Superintendent leaving Hermiston at the end of June

By JENNIFER COLTON  
Staff Writer

Hermiston Deputy Superintendent Wade Smith has accepted the position of superintendent for the Walla Walla School District.

"It's bittersweet," Smith said Friday. "It was kind of surreal this morning. It's been a great experience in Hermiston, but this was too good an opportunity to pass up."

The Walla Walla Public Schools Board of Directors unanimously named Smith that district's new superintendent during a meeting

Thursday night. Smith's last day with the Hermiston School District is June 30, and he will begin the Walla Walla job on July 1.

A first generation college student, Smith's career began as a chemistry teacher in the Long Creek School District before becoming a principal at Heppner High School. After two years as assistant superintendent for the Morrow County School District, he came to Hermiston nine years ago as an assistant superintendent.

In 2011, Smith, then assistant superintendent for support services, was named Hermiston School District's Administrator of the Year. That same year, he became the interim superintendent when Fred Maiocco was deployed to Kuwait for 18 months with the U.S. Army reserves.

From April 2011 until October 2012, Smith led the Hermiston School District and was named deputy superintendent upon Maiocco's return.

"What a great ride," Smith said of his nine years in Hermiston. "All the things that we've done for kids — not just the capital construction improvement, but when it comes to closing the achievement gap with our Latino students and our students in poverty. There have been a lot of great things that have happened since I've been here. This is a community that rallies around their youth, and I'm sure they'll have no problem finding outstanding folks to take over."

Smith said the Walla

Walla position is a way to take the next step in his career but remain in a rural region he and his family love.



Wade Smith

"When you're looking for leadership and growth, there are only a few school districts in the region, so you can't pass up opportunities," he said. "This was a big family discussion before I even put my name in the hat, but my family is incredibly supportive. They understand this is part of working in education. The next adventure in our life started last night."

In addition to the Walla Walla position, Smith was also a finalist for the superintendent position in the Pendleton School District.

"I am going to miss the Hermiston community, the

administration, but on equal footing is the excitement to assist the Walla Walla community doing some extraordinary things. I think the stars have aligned in that community with a board and a community ready to take the next step and do something amazing," he said.

Smith will submit a resignation to the Hermiston School Board of Education, and Maiocco said the district will begin advertising for a replacement. The position will be for assistant superintendent; however, the district is still finalizing what specialization that position will be for. Smith was hired as assistant superintendent for human resources, and Maiocco said the position morphed with Smith's specific capabilities.

"No one will fill his shoes exactly — they are huge shoes to fill — but we are excited about this opportunity," he said. "Obviously, replacing Wade is going to be a very big chore for us, but I think Walla Walla will thrive under his leadership."

Smith said his family will move to Walla Walla, including his two children and his wife, Marianne, an art teacher at Hermiston High School. Maiocco said the entire family has been an asset to Hermiston.

"They (Walla Walla) could not have made a finer choice. I think it's an opportunity for Wade and his family. Marianne is an extraordinary teacher, and she will be just as hard to replace as Wade. They will be missed, but we wish them the best."

# Local students move on to state in Battle of the Books

By JENNIFER COLTON  
Staff Writer

Battles were waged and prizes were won this weekend at Blue Mountain Community College, and at the end of the day, two Hermiston teams took home championships.

Thirty-five teams from schools across Eastern Oregon competed Saturday in bracketed play in the Region 6 Oregon Battle of the Books competition. Sandstone Middle School brought home the championship in the middle school division, and Rocky Heights Elementary, also from Hermiston, brought back the championship for the elementary teams.

Both championship Hermiston teams, as well as the second-place teams from each division — La Grande Middle School and McNary Heights Elementary — will compete in the state finals, April 9 at Chemeketa Community College in Salem. This is the first time since 2008 the Eastern Oregon region has had enough participation district-wide to send the second-place team to state. This is also the first time McNary Heights has competed at the state level.

The team bracket featured schools from across Eastern Oregon: Adrian, Arlington, Baker, Boardman, Echo, Ione, Helix, Heppner, Hermiston, La Grande and Pendleton.

In the elementary division, the finals came down to the battle of the heights as Hermiston's Rocky Heights Elementary faced off against Umatilla's McNary Heights Elementary. For two young students — Tate Neddo and Elizabeth Doherty — the championship had an extra challenge as the cousins competed against each other.

"It made for an extra exciting battle," coach and parent Tess Neddo said Monday, "with their grandma sitting very diplomatically right in the middle."

The fifth-graders from Rocky Heights squeezed past the third-grade "Bookcraft" team from McNary Heights 48 to 43, according to Kristi Smalley, elementary librarian for the Hermiston School District. Both teams will compete in Salem in April.

As champions, both Sandstone and Rocky Heights received a set of 12 titles for

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO BY KRISTI SMALLEY

The YMNMs from Sandstone Middle School — Yaloani Alvarado, from left, Maria Tejada, Nazly Chavez, Mirely Reyes, Sally Wooster and coach Krista Fisher — will move on to the state Oregon Battle of the Books.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO BY TESS NEDDO

The members of "Bookcraft" — Tate Neddo, from left, April Bettencourt, Eden Enkey Joben Padberg — hold up certificates after a school-wide championship battle at McNary Heights Elementary.

the 2017 Oregon Battle of the Books program.

"Upon receiving the books, Rocky Heights team member Ashley Treadwell

immediately asked, 'Can we read them?' and them enthusiastically picked out the title she wanted to read first," Smalley said.

Oregon Battle of the Books is a volunteer-run program sponsored by the Oregon Association of School Libraries.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO BY MELISSA DOHERTY

The Rocky Heights Elementary team — Elizabeth Doherty, Stephanie Booher, Ashley Treadwell, Katelyn Wadkins — hold up books read for Oregon Battle of the Books.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO BY MELISSA DOHERTY

Numerous Hermiston elementary students and staff participated in the regional Battle of the Books competition this weekend: Back row, from left: Kristi Smalley, HSD Elementary Librarian, Desert View Team: Kira Grigg, Boone Turner, Megan Palzinski, Sidney Estes, Sunset Team: Keyla Martinez, Lyndsay Egerer, Andrea Sacher, Brooklynn Warburton; middle row, from left: West Park Team: Helen Rohrman, Renna Gorham, Sabrina Stoddard, Emily Schwertfeger, Highland Hills: Claire Owens, Lauren Wilson, McKenna Hillman, Madeleine White; front row, from left: Rocky Heights Team: Elizabeth Doherty, Stephanie Booher, Ashley Treadwell, Katelyn Wadkins

# Incumbents unopposed

By JADE McDOWELL  
Staff Writer

Despite a heated presidential race creating controversy for this year's primary elections, local races in Hermiston are promising to be quiet ones.

Mayor David Drotzmann is running unopposed for a third term and Municipal Judge Thomas Creasing is once again running unopposed as well.

The filing deadline was 5 p.m. Tuesday.

Drotzmann, a local optometrist who owns Lifetime Vision Source, has been mayor since 2013. He also serves on the city's Community Enhancement Committee, the Branding Committee sponsored by the city and Chamber of Commerce, and the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center's fundraising committee.

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