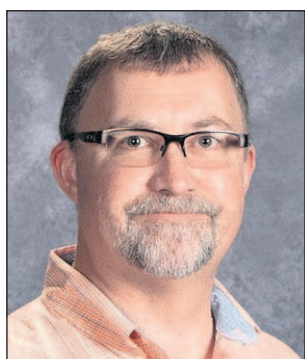


Umatilla teacher named civic scholar

HERMISTON HERALD

A Umatilla School District teacher has been named a 2017-18 civic scholar, a statewide honor that recognizes teachers dedicated to civics education.



Chris Early

Chris Early, a civics teacher at Umatilla High School, was selected by state Rep. Greg Smith, R-Heppner, for the honor. Each state representative selects two teachers from their district to be civic scholars, and those teachers are enrolled for the Civics Conference at the state Capitol in December.

Early has taught in the Umatilla School District for 13 years. He said he was surprised by the nomination, but was looking forward to attending the conference.

"I wouldn't miss it," he said. "I'll be in good company."

Early said he tries to help students become critical thinkers.

"I look to equip students to discern what's good information and what's not," he said. That includes talking about the U.S. gov-

ernment from a structural standpoint.

"I try to give students a thorough grounding in the Constitution," he said. "This is why our government looks the way it does."

The conference will feature presentations from each branch of government, and lessons from master teachers about how to implement civics lessons into curriculum.

"I expect to come away with a lot of good stuff for my students," Early said.

The conference is put on by the Classroom Law Project, a program dedicated to engaging students in government.



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Mitch Eddings, of Snoqualmie, Washington, helps his grandmother, Geneva Eddings, with her birthday cards during her 109th birthday party on Thursday in Hermiston.

Former 'Rosie the Welder' turns 109

By JADE McDOWELL
STAFF WRITER

Geneva Eddings turned 109 on Thursday, but if you want to know the secret to living a long life you'll have to ask someone else.

"I haven't the foggiest idea," she said.

Her children, who are all older than 80, have a few ideas.

"It's the genes, I guess, and good honest living," her son, Ralph Eddings, said.

He and his sister Muriel Eddings celebrated Geneva's birthday with her at Regency Hermiston Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, along with staff and a few other family members. They said their mother never smoked, rarely drank and placed an emphasis on fruits and vegetables that was ahead of her time.

Parts of Geneva's memory are fading, but one can't blame her for not recalling some details from her childhood or exactly how her husband proposed. She was married before many peoples' grandparents were born.

Still, she always recognizes family and can recall hiking, picnicking, fishing and other activities with her children as they grew up.

"We played games," she said. "I just enjoyed being with them. I love them."

Geneva was born in 1908, just a month before Henry Ford unveiled the Model T automobile. Her father had left Virginia to work on the railroad in the Pacific Northwest, and her mother soon followed in a cross-country train while eight months pregnant. After Geneva was born in Troy, Idaho, the family moved to Pullman, Washington, and then Colfax, Washington, where she spent most of her childhood.

Geneva's father died of the Spanish flu when she was 9, forcing her disabled mother to go to work in a laundry to support the family. Muriel said Gene-



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Geneva Eddings raised her family in the Tacoma area with her husband Benjamin Ralph Eddings.



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Ralph Eddings of Snoqualmie, Washington, at left, tells a story about his mother, Geneva, during her 109th birthday party on Thursday in Hermiston.

va would come home from school each day with her brother to a cold house and they would have to start the fire and dinner while their mother was at work. Geneva eventually dropped out of high school to help support the family.

She met Benjamin Ralph Eddings at a dance hall, and remembers thinking how good-looking he was. They married when she was 20 and the couple had three children.

"I don't know that they expected me," Muriel, the youngest, said. "I was a surprise."

Muriel was born in the midst of the Great Depression, and her father was laid off from the railroad and traveled the country for a while until he found a job as a longshoreman. When

World War II started, Benjamin was too old to be drafted and Ralph, their oldest child, was too young.

"Mother wanted to know from Dad what was the best job for a woman that could make the most money, and he said that was as a welder," Muriel said.

So Geneva learned to weld and began working on Navy ships in Tacoma. She was one of the only female welders around, but it didn't faze her.

"I was so busy that I didn't have time to have it bother me," she said.

Ralph said his parents always worked hard to give their children a good life, and Geneva frequently sacrificed things she needed — even new underwear — so that her children could enjoy their childhood.

"I remember that holey underwear hanging on the line and I used to shake my head, but I couldn't refuse that dollar to go ice skating with my girlfriend," Ralph said.

He said his mom never complained, even when the family's vacation plans meant that she went straight from a long graveyard shift to a six-mile hike with the family. As Geneva's only boy, he said he could "do no wrong in her eyes" and that knowledge affected his choices his entire life.

"I did the best I could not to shame her and the family," he said. "I avoided a lot of mischief because of my love for her."

When Ralph decided to become a doctor, his parents told him they couldn't afford to help pay his tuition, but they did help in other ways. He used to mail his laundry home and his mother would do it for him and send it back, which at the time was cheaper than going to a laundromat.

Muriel said her mother was a "super-mom" and she's grateful they have been able to remain close.

"Dad died in about 1983, so Mom and I have been kind of pals since then," she said.

Surrounded by family and friends on Thursday, Geneva accepted birthday hugs, well-wishes and cards that she read out loud to the group. She wore pink for the special occasion, along with a rose and a birthday sash. Muriel announced to the group that Geneva had become a great-great-grandmother for the first time a few days earlier.

Geneva said she was grateful to everyone who came, and thought the cake was delicious.

"Thank you all," she said, after struggling to find the right words to express her emotions.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.



STAFF PHOTO BY JADE McDOWELL

Sunset Park in Hermiston awaits the arrival of new playground equipment.

City to celebrate groundbreaking for new Sunset Park Thursday

Community members are invited to celebrate a hard-won victory that will result in new playground equipment at Sunset Park.

A celebration will be held Thursday at 4 p.m. at the park, located at the intersection of Northeast Fourth Street and East Dogwood Ave. The groundbreaking ceremony to begin installation of the new equipment is a result of Hermiston residents rallying votes to win an online contest sponsored by Moda Health and the Portland Trail Blazers, pledging one dollar per assist during the Blazers' 2017 season.

Attending the ceremony on behalf of the Portland Trail Blazers will be vice president of social

responsibility Christa Stout and Moda Health senior vice president Robin Richardson.

Boys and girls ages 7-10 have also signed up to participate in four 30-minute basketball clinics taught by a Blazers camp staffer (not to be confused with members of the Blazers coaching staff), according to Moda corporate social responsibility manager Karis Stoudamire-Phillips. The clinics will take place from 3-5 p.m.

Hermiston won the Moda Assist competition in March, beating out schools in Portland and Tillamook by more than 4,000 votes. The contest was expected to net about \$20,000 for the park.

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