



STAFF PHOTO BY E. J. HARRIS

Fire safety educator Gretchen Erickson teaches a group of fifth graders the cobra pose while teaching a class on how to say no to peer pressure on Thursday at Rocky Heights Elementary School in Hermiston. The cobra pose is used by law enforcement officers to project confidence, according to Erickson.

Students learn to harness their ‘superpowers’

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
HERMISTON HERALD

The best way for children to stay safe and protect others, according to Gretchen Erickson, is to harness their superpowers.

“It would be great if we had a force field around us to protect us,” she told a group of fifth graders Thursday. “But we do have a superpower. What is the first thing a baby does when it’s born?”

The students called out: “It cries!”

“Babies learn very quickly how to use their superpower voice,” she said. “[Your voice] is your power, too.”

Erickson, the fire safety educator for the Umatilla County Fire District, visits most elementary school classrooms in the Hermiston School District once a month. She spends most of her half-hour lesson teaching them how to keep themselves, and others, safe in various situations.

Thursday’s lesson, to a group of Rocky Heights Elementary School students, wasn’t about fire, but about using their voices to speak up — to help someone else or to resist peer pressure.

Erickson told students that it’s important to stand up for themselves. She also taught students that while reporting something they see another person doing wrong may feel like tattling, there’s a difference.

“When someone comes to the police station and reports that their car has been stolen, is that tattling or reporting?” she asked. “Police couldn’t do anything without reporting — there wouldn’t be a job.”

Erickson was an officer with the Hermiston Police Department for 23 years, and taught in the schools in that capacity as well. She

has worked in schools for UCFD since 2004.

“As a police officer, it was more about crime — shoplifting, assault,” she said. “Now it’s more about protection. Protecting yourself and your family.”

In her safety lessons, Erickson said she tries to work in ideas to try to get students to draw their own

conclusions.

“When I give the example of starting the car in the garage, that’s carbon monoxide poisoning,” she said. “When you talk about Grandpa’s new gun, that’s gun safety. I try to weave in lessons to help kids make the connections without me giving them the recipe, so to say.”

She spends a lot of time on fire safety, teaching students about the different ways house fires can start, the importance of having

a smoke detector in their bedroom, and how to avoid smoke, which she calls “floating poison.”

Erin Andreason, a Rocky Heights teacher, said Erickson has been visiting her class for about 10 years.

“The students are always very excited to hear the message she’ll be sending,” she said. “She has done lessons on the importance of having a family plan in case of fire, making sure they have an emergency contact, flagging down fire and police outside.”

She said Erickson has stressed to students the importance of basic safety knowledge, like having their addresses memorized in order to tell emergency officials if they need help.

Erickson’s lessons span pedestrian and car safety, and water safety in the warmer months. But no matter the subject, all her lessons drive home one point.

“Pay attention,” Erickson said. “That’s the most important safety rule.”

“[Your voice] is your power, too.”

Gretchen Erickson

Burton is new Stanfield superintendent

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
STAFF WRITER

Stanfield School District has a new superintendent, several months earlier than initially expected.

Beth Burton, current Stanfield Secondary School principal, was announced as the board’s pick to lead the district at a special meeting Friday. She assumed the role Tuesday.

School board chair Scott Morris said he had a conversation with current superintendent Shelley Liscom, who in December submitted her intent to resign at the end of the school year. He said that because Burton was from within the district, board members felt it made sense to have her start now.

“I asked (Liscom) if that would work,” Morris said.

The board voted 4-0 (board member Elizabeth Sperr was absent for the decision) to have Burton assume the superintendent’s office on Tuesday and place Liscom on paid leave from Tuesday until June 15, which was previously scheduled to be her last day with the district.

Morris said Liscom



STAFF PHOTO BY JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN

Lacey Sharp, left, and Beth Burton at a special school board meeting Friday. Burton assumed the Stanfield Schools superintendent role Tuesday, several months earlier than planned. Burton is currently principal of Stanfield Secondary School.

asked to have the district pick up her insurance for the next two years, which would cost around \$30,000. The board unanimously voted not to extend coverage past the end of her employment with the district.

Morris said that for now, Burton will serve as both secondary school principal and superintendent, and the elementary school principal spot will remain open. He said assistant principal Lacey Sharp has already

been taking on several of the elementary principal duties. He said the board will now begin looking at filling those roles, but the timeline for doing so is unclear.

Some, including Sharp, had questions about how the transition would work. She also asked Morris how they would communicate the news to teachers, who had not yet been officially informed of the changes. They agreed that Burton, Sharp and Morris would

have a brief meeting with teachers on Monday to tell them.

Burton was the only person from the district to apply. She was selected by the board, and by a screening committee that consisted of some teachers and a few community members.

Liscom had been at the district for four years, and resigned after months of contention with the board. She did not respond to a request for comment.

Hermiston high school student dies

HERMISTON HERALD

Counselors and a safe room were available to students at Hermiston High School Monday after the death of a student.

The Hermiston School District was notified Mon-

day morning by the Hermiston Police Department of the death of Jenna Thomas, a sophomore and member of the high school’s swim team, according to a news release from the district.

Members of the area crisis flight team that respond

to schools during times of tragedy were on hand to help staff and students process the difficult news.

“The district asks for parent and community support by keeping an eye out for those students, or staff members, that may be

struggling with the news,” the district stated, noting that counselors are available for those struggling. “We are heartbroken for the Thomas family. Our thoughts and prayers go out to them and friends and relatives of Jenna.”

Community colleges ask legislature for \$32 million

HERMISTON HERALD

Oregon’s community colleges are asking the legislature to allocate an additional \$32 million to them during the current session.

The colleges say the extra funding would help mitigate tuition increases. Blue Mountain Community College increased tuition from \$97 to \$104 per credit for the 2017-2018 school year.

During the 2017 session the legislature appropriated \$70 million more to public universities than the previous biennium, but only \$6 million additional funding for community colleges, representing a 27 percent increase in general fund dollars going toward universities compared to a 13 percent increase for community colleges.

The state has seven universities and 17 community colleges.

“Lack of funding at the state level forces community colleges to place an

unfair burden on the backs of students in the form of tuition increases,” a news release from BMCC stated. “Community colleges already serve students with the greatest academic, financial and social challenges, but receive less per student in public funding than their university counterparts.”

The college provided examples of ways it is already working to help students save money. Those efforts include programs, success coaches, faculty advisors and an early college credit connections coordinator, all geared toward helping students only take courses necessary for their degree or certifications so they finish sooner and don’t pay tuition on unnecessary classes.

“Investing in community colleges now will help colleges continue this path of profound change in how we serve students,” the news release stated.

The 2018 legislative session began Monday.

WORSHIP COMMUNITY

NEW BEGINNINGS

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
Worship Service 10:30 AM
Sunday School 9:00 AM
Pastor J.C. Barnett
Children’s Church & Nursery Available
700 West Orchard Avenue
P.O. Box 933
Hermiston, Oregon
541-567-8441

LANDMARK BAPTIST CHURCH
125 E. Beech Ave. • 567-3232
Pastor David Dever

Sun. Bible Classes.....10:00am
Sun. Worship Service.....11:00am
Sun. Evening Worship.....6:00pm
Wed. Prayer & Bible Study.....6:00pm

www.hermistonlmbc.com

First United Methodist Church Hermiston
191 E. Gladys Ave., Hermiston OR
Sunday Worship 11am • 541-567-3002

Nursery available Check us out on Face Book
Worship Livestream at herfumc.com
Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors
Rev. Dr. Jim Pierce, pastor

Grace Baptist Church
555 SW 11th, Hermiston
567-9497

Nursery provided for all services
Sunday School - 9:30 AM
Worship - 10:45 AM
6:00 PM

Wed Prayer & Worship - 7:00 PM
“Proclaiming God’s word, growing in God’s grace”

Our Lady of Angels Catholic Church
565 W. HERMISTON AVE.
DAILY MASS: Monday-Friday

.....English 7:00 am
Thursday.....Spanish 6:00 pm
SATURDAY.....English 5:00 pm
.....Spanish 7:00 pm
SUNDAY.....English 9:00 am
.....Bilingual 11:00 am
.....Spanish 1:00 pm
Office.....567-5812

Seventh-day Adventist Church
Saturdays
Sabbath School.....9:30 a.m.
Worship Service.....11:00 a.m.
English & Spanish Services

567-8241
855 W. Highland • Hermiston

Echo Community Church
21 N. Bonanza Street, Echo OR
Phone: (541) 376-8108
Sunday School • 9:30am
Worship • 10:45am
Children’s Church • 11:15am
Potluck & Communion ~
First Sunday of the Month

First Christian Church
“Proclaiming the Message of Hope, Living the Gospel of Love”
Sunday School 9:15am
Worship Gathering 10:30 am
Children’s Church 10:30 am

567-3013
775 W. Highland Ave., Hermiston

The Full Gospel Home Church
235 SW 3rd
Phone 567-7678
Rev. Ed Baker - Rev. Nina Baker

Sunday:
Sunday School.....10:00 am
Worship.....11:00 am
Evening Service.....7:00 pm
Wednesday Service.....7:00 pm
“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”
1 Pet. 5:7

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