

Boardman educator named Migrant Education Teacher of the Year for 2019

HERMISTON HERALD

Edelmira “Connie” Garcia, who teaches at Sam Boardman Elementary School, recently received an A+ for her efforts.

A longtime employee of the InterMountain Education Service District, she was named the 2019 Title I-C Migrant Education Teacher of the Year.

The Oregon Department of Education honored Garcia Nov. 15 during the 2019 Migrant Education Program Conference in Salem.

The award is presented to an educator who has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to Oregon’s migrant students, their families and to the Migrant Education Program in Oregon.

Eric Volger, IMESD’s MEP Coordinator, said Garcia is engaging, energetic, organized and compassionate.

While teaching pre-school-aged children, she creates lessons that are interactive and fun, involving students in song, dance and games. Garcia’s passion for teaching, Volger said, contributes to a successful learning environment and an excellent rapport with students.



Contributed photo
Edelmira “Connie” Garcia was honored Nov. 15 for her work with the InterMountain Education Service District.

“In my nearly three decades in education, I have never witnessed a pre-K teacher who is more engaging and effective than Connie,” he said.

“She is absolutely worthy of being recognized as Title I-C Teacher of the Year.”

Michele Madril, director of communication, said IMESD’s Migrant Education Program served 1,362 students in the 2018-19 school year.

For more information, contact Madril at 541-966-3115 or michele.madril@imesd.k12.or.us.

New Hermiston BMCC club is taking off

By JESSICA POLLARD
STAFF WRITER

For the first time in years, the Blue Mountain Community College Hermiston Center has a new Latino club focused on leadership. It’s called “Unidxs.”

“The Spanish language is very gendered,” said Nayali Contreras, one of the club’s advisors. “Unidos, masculine, and unidas, feminine, both translate to ‘united.’ The ‘X’ in unidxs’ is to make it gender inclusive. This is a way for people not to have to choose between masculine and feminine.”

A year ago, campus life at the Hermiston Blue Mountain Community College Center was scant.

“Last year,” said student Zayra Preciado, who is in charge of marketing for the new group, “I didn’t see much student life.”

According to Contreras, who is coordinator for the Precision Irrigated Agriculture Facility at BMCC Hermiston and an advisor for the group, there aren’t any clubs this year besides Unidxs.

“The center has felt more alive this year,” she said.

The idea for the club started growing last year, according to Contreras. Back then, she served as the school’s Student Success Coach and said there was a want to create more space in the community for the Hermiston Center’s 46%



Staff photo by Jessica Pollard
BMCC Hermiston Center’s new club, Unidxs, met Wednesday to discuss a recent fundraiser.

Latino population.

“We wanted to add a Latinx Liaison title to the Student Success Coach position,” she said.

At a recent BMCC board meeting last month, members approved Selene Torres-Madrano’s contract for that dual position. Torres-Madrano also advises Unidxs.

Contreras also dreamed of organizing a special graduation celebration for the school, which would provide a more personal cultural space in addition to the BMCC graduation commencement each year. The first annual iteration of the Latinx Graduation Celebration is set to take place at the end of this school year.

“I was also trying to think of something not just driven by me,” she said. “As staff, I might not be here in a few years.”

Enter, the Unidxs club.

The club is currently comprised of six organizers and five members so far this year. The organizers are all planning on moving on to four-year universities after getting their two-year transfer degrees at BMCC and are interested in everything from journalism to kinesiology.

“It’s nice to have a space to be around people who go through the same struggles as you,” said the group’s treasurer, Brenda Mendoza.

Elias Esquivel, the club’s president, puts it plainly.

“I had no friends here before this club,” he said. “I think its growth will continue.”

Their first order of business is organizing fundraisers in hopes of attending the U.S. Hispanic Leadership Institute conference in Chicago, Illinois, this February. This month, they sold

134 dozen tamales and raised over \$1,000 toward that goal.

Contreras said that many schools on the west side of the state, including Oregon State University, send swaths of students to the national event each year. The institute’s website describes the event as a good opportunity for young people to network with policy makers and prospective employers.

“I’m not sure if people here don’t know about it,” she said. “But no one on this side of Oregon has made attending the conference a priority.”

Esquivel said that now that the initial fundraiser is over, the group is kicking back and planning more team-oriented events as well, like bowling. But they’ve also been honing their networking skills.

Recently, club members met with Hermiston-based Latino organization Raices to learn how they might help out with the organization’s events in the future.

“Part of our mission is to be involved with the community,” Mendoza said.

Contreras hopes that as the club gains momentum, its student members will develop leadership skills that they can take with them to their next college experience.

“I really want this club to be a leadership development experience,” Contreras said.

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