



Erick Peterson/Hermiston Herald

Christy Meyers, office assistant at West Park Elementary, Hermiston, opens her school's new book vending machine on Friday, March 25, 2022.

Book vending machine a hit at West Park

By ERICK PETERSON
Hermiston Herald

A new vending machine in Hermiston contains something that will strike some people as a surprise.

Instead of candy or soda, West Park Elementary now has a book vending machine inside its library.

"I really like it," fourth grader Kaitlyn Solorio said. "It's really pretty, and I like how they decorated it."

The vending machine is decorated in school colors and logos, it contains 250 books and it stands near the checkout desk in the school's library. Kaitlyn said she has looked the machine over several times, and she already has picked out the books she would like to own from it.

According to school office assistant Christy Meyers, the machine is generating a buzz among students, even though the machine is not now working. The school is waiting on a repair; still, students are regularly asking about it. "They're really so excited, so excited," she said.

The books, Meyers said, are not for checkout. Rather, they are intended as prizes for students, who earn tokens for achieving reading goals. Then, they drop the coins in the machine's slot, select their desired books and wait for books to drop into a drawer, where they can be retrieved.

Meyers said she first heard of the machines from a friend on Facebook. She then started talking about it to school administration and members of the Parent-Teacher Organization. The PTO, she said, loved the idea and offered to pay for it.

The PTO purchased the machine for around \$6,000, which includes service.

There was no cost to the school or the Hermiston School District, according to Meyers.

"There was a lot of work for it," she said. "Carnivals, fundraisers, popcorn sales, all sorts of things have been done. Kid Bank was huge, and there were so many other things where people worked really hard."

She said the idea has been implemented by other schools, which have found success. In ordinary reading programs, such as the one at West Park, students meet their goals and are handed books. But, she said, there is more excitement with something new. By giving coins and allowing students to select their own book from a machine, they are enjoying something different.

Where this has been done, Meyers said, students have liked it, which encourages them to read more, earn more coins and obtain more books.

This machine is not, and could never, replace the school's librarian, as it does not check out books, Meyers said. Also, she added, it does not perform the many other tasks of the library staff.

This came as good news to Amy Cooper, West Park Elementary library assistant, who was looking over the vending machine with Meyers on March 25.

"I'm not threatened by it at all," Cooper said. "It's fun. It's exciting. Kids talk about it every time they come in, and they check it out three or four times a day, and they'll still talk about it. They're super excited."

As a book lover, Cooper said she feels happy about any project such as this that encourages reading. She is not alone in this enthusiasm.

Mooney named to state building task force

Hermiston Herald

Tricia Mooney, superintendent of the Hermiston School District, has been appointed to the newly created Joint Task Force on Resilient Efficient Buildings to guide the development of the state's building code policies.

The purpose of the task force is to consider the impact of building codes on energy efficiency, air quality, and public health while reducing the amount of taxpayer income spent on energy costs.

The task force comprises 27 members charged with helping Oregon address long-term economic and environmental savings and benefits by evaluating code policy adjustments for new and existing residential, commercial, and industrial buildings and making recommendations to legislative committees prior to the 2023 Session.

Mooney was selected to represent building owners and managers, as the Hermiston School District includes 10 publicly owned school and administrative buildings of varying ages. The school dis-

trict is also the largest in Eastern Oregon and has among the fastest-growing student populations in the state.

"In Hermiston, our facilities are tested year-round by summers in the triple digits, winters well below freezing, and wildfire smoke that creates health impacts for kids with asthma and other respiratory illnesses," Mooney said. "Rural school districts and local governments have needs that far surpass our local tax base. We need the state to invest in our local communities. If we work together, we can promote cleaner air while lowering energy costs for local taxpayers and build public facilities that are healthier for the people who use them."

Mooney is the only member of the task force representing education. State Sen. Lynn Findley (R-Vale) and Rep. Mark Owens (R-Crane) are the legislative representatives from Eastern Oregon. Other members represent construction trades, residential and commercial builders, utilities, local governments, environmental justice advocates, public health and more.

The first meeting of the Joint Task Force on Resilient Efficient Buildings is Tuesday, April 5 and live streams of all meetings are available at olis.oregonlegislature.gov.



Mooney

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