

# SMALL TALK

## *The Road Less Traveled*



By  
*George Murdock*  
*Executive Director*

At the November meeting of the Ukiah School Board, it was reported that the school district had become a recipient of four elk representing 1,280 pounds of meat. It was also noted that two to three more elk would very likely be donated during the second hunt season. Since the school operates a dormitory and like most small schools operates on a shoestring, the meat makes a big difference in food costs.

The elk primarily come from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which confiscates and seizes the animals for a variety of reasons. All agents are licensed meat inspectors so any animals deemed fit for human consumption come to the district USDA-approved with appropriate stickers. As one board member noted, most of the elk also come with a “stupid hunter story” attached at no extra charge. When someone else commented on how much it cost to have the meat processed, an audience member observed that it probably cost the hunter involved a good deal more in assorted fines and charges.

RURAL POLICY MATTERS, a monthly publication of the Rural School and Community Trust reports that ELL student enrollment in rural districts is increasing at a much faster rate than in non-rural districts. This has implications for policy-makers and legislators who traditionally view diversity as a metropolitan issue and for some in rural districts who are caught off guard and unprepared when an ELL family arrives on their doorstep for the first time.

THE LINFIELD COLLEGE Athletics newsletter recently reported that former Wildcat football star, Gene Forman, just completed his 40<sup>th</sup> season as a high school head football coach. Now in his 13<sup>th</sup> season at Days Creek, Forman led the Wolves

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## **Some years are a breeze; others ... well...**

By Diane Griffin  
*OSSA Teacher of the Year*

Ever had a school year that got off to a rough start – you know, a rumbly, bumbly one? Maybe a few scheduling problems that never quite got worked out to your satisfaction or never worked out in the best interests of the students. Here’s another one we can face -- the important books or supplies you ordered didn’t come in – but as educators all do many times – you were able to wing it and come up with a satisfactory “Plan B.”

This fall, my year got off to a start such as I have described. In addition I have an action-packed group of students. To top it off, my husband had a bad fall this summer and I have had to miss a number of days because of his surgeries. This is a great lead-in to student classroom behavior for substitute teachers.

Some years your classes can pull off a command, positive performance when you, the teacher, are absent. Other years you feel wary of even having to be gone for an hour. I wish I could give you a magic formula to make all things go well while you are away from your classroom – not possible. Here are a few obvious things to think about for the success of a sub experience.



OSSA Teacher of the Year Diane Griffin receives a special gift basket on behalf of the OSSA from Knappa Superintendent Rick Pass.

We all know that well-written, full plans for the substitute are so important. A clear classroom behavior expectation plan is essential. Leave some adhesive nametags for your students to wear during sub-time. Knowing student names can give your sub a connection to your class. Make sure emergency plans, such as fire and earthquake, are visible.

Those are the basics – but they are still not a 100 percent guarantee that all will go well.

I’ve spent a great deal of time thinking about it this year – why don’t things go well for subs all the time? One of the most sensible reasons for this unacceptable behavior came to me from one of my subs. She said quite simply, “They miss you, Diane.” Nonsense – they know I’ll be back. I told them to behave. I thought about this further. Missing their regular, everyday teacher is just the tip of the iceberg upon what our relationship with our students is built upon. From Day One in September, a bond is formed with your students, the ground rules and boundaries are clear, the classroom chemistry formula has been set; your year together has started. No matter what, they are YOUR students and you are THEIR teacher. They depend on you to be there for them. Their world at school doesn’t feel quite right when you are not there. With so many students,

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to a 9-3 record and the Skyline League title. Forman is also a former teammate of mine from Toledo (Washington) High School, although the term “star” was never used in any reference to my own gridiron career. Those who know me will be surprised to learn that I weighed 95 pounds as a freshman and just under 155 pounds as a senior.

Speaking of football stories, the Dayton community was rocked this fall by the loss of legendary Coach Dewey Sullivan, who died after 42 years at the Pirate helm. In many ways, the long-time coach epitomizes the inextricable web that ties together small communities with their sports programs.

Sullivan compiled a 351-85-2 overall record, and is Oregon’s all-time winningest high school football coach. He won state titles in 1985, 1986, 1995, 1996, and 2002. His teams were in the state playoffs for 24 straight years.

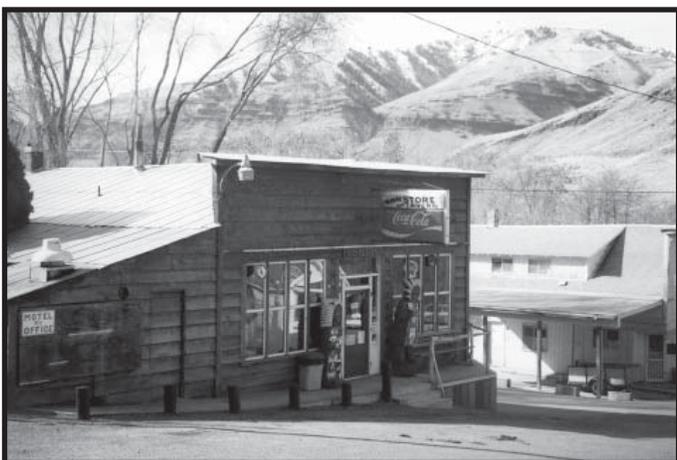
To the community of Dayton and the legions of players and students whose lives he touched, he was role model, teacher, coach, and friend. A frequent figure at graduations, weddings, and reunions, his influence touched every aspect of the Dayton community.

The Oregon Small Schools Associations salutes the life of Dewey Sullivan as a tribute to the values of rural education.

Congratulations to OSSA Region Two and Reg McShane for 100 percent membership. As a bonus, we have featured four Region Two schools in this issue — St. Paul, Mt. Angel, Amity, and Dayton.

Those of you who were at the OSSA Breakfast at the OSBA Convention will remember that the musical presentation was highly-acclaimed and included a student from Ione and Pendleton. OSBA has now extended an invitation to the Ione-based program to perform at a general session at next year’s OSBA Convention with even more performers added in anticipation of a much larger room.

And now for yet another culinary tribute! This time we are honoring the Innaha Store and Café, which is strategically located at the main intersection in the middle of this isolated Eastern Oregon village. It is also just across the way from the Innaha School, which is part of the Joseph system. To get to Innaha, go to Joseph, and then head about 30 miles east.



Innaha Store & Cafe

## Breeze ... continued from pg.1

the stability and predictability of the classroom are the best part of their days. When we are gone things don’t work just the same. Crevasses and danger zones show up on this iceberg and many students can’t resist the temptation to get close to the danger.

No, I don’t have the solution to make all “sub days” be great days, but this I do know: Our students count on us to be there, to provide for their learning and emotional needs, to give them predictable, safe, and nurturing days at school.

Wishing you all the best for a smoothly flowing year for you and your students.

## Board Meeting Notes

Members of the OSSA gathered in Portland for the annual fall meeting and handled a long and ambitious agenda, including some key appointments, preparing for the upcoming legislative session, and dealing with other association matters. President John Widenoja presided over the meeting.

The board learned that several individuals have been added to the Legislative Committee, including Rolla Weber, Marcola superintendent; Jeff Davis, Central Curry superintendent; and Kevin Purnell, Prairie City superintendent.

The 2007 Small School Summit will be held in conjunction with the COSA-OSBA Legislative Conference. The OSSA Summit is set for 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Dec. 18. The Legislative Conference begins shortly thereafter at the same location.

Copies of a new document, “No Rural Child Left Behind,” were distributed to members and it was announced that copies would be available throughout the convention and others were being mailed to districts.

Widenoja and Peter Tarzian reported on their attendance at the National Rural Education Association Conference and indicated it was valuable for Oregon to be affiliated with this group.

Executive Secretary Tami Peterson distributed copies of the membership report and indicated OSSA participation continues to be on the rise.

A committee composed of Dr. Hilda Rosselli, Robert Valiant, Tami Peterson and Reg McShane is working to make adjustments in the OSSA Summer Institute in hopes of increasing participation. Dr. Rosselli, an ex-officio member of the OSSA Board representing Western Oregon University, is working hard to expand opportunities for collaboration between her institution and OSSA to attract more attendees at the summer event.

# Lessons Learned

By Gene Carlson

Superintendent, Condon School District

Years ago, when I was about 18-19 (50 years ago) my father was asked a question about his three children. The question was, "How did you raise your children so that they turned out to be such good citizens and students?" I will remember his answer in all of what is left of my life. He said, "We never raised our children to be equal. We raised them according to their needs. One child needed to be left alone. One child needed to be kicked in the rear. The third child needed extra love and reassurance. We gave them what they needed. Adequacy was our measuring stick." I was the third child.

This is my 42<sup>nd</sup> year in education. I have tried to live up to that particular standard of adequacy with all the children for whom I have had responsibility, whether as a parent, teacher, coach or school administrator. I have a good facility for communication and enjoy math considerably. My major in college was chemistry. When I graduated from college, I became a research chemist.

I am in my sixth interim superintendent position. In all of those 42 years I have learned many lessons. A few of them are,

- All kids are not equal;
- The problems our children face are certainly more complex than those I faced;
- No matter how hard we try, not every student can be a Nobel prize winner;
- Most kids can work harder and do better in school;
- End-point tests in education are like driving a car looking through a rear view mirror. You can see where you have been but you can't see where the learning problems occurred that every child has. Was the problem in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, the 10<sup>th</sup> grade? Was it related more to reading than math skills? Did a problem occur in October that affected the rest of the year?
- End-point tests are a sure way to separate society into haves and have nots;
- End-point tests never measure when or whether a child was ready to learn;
- Students who are the result of some grand experiment in education that didn't work are often called dissatisfied voters;
- We should go to school 5.5 days a week as they do in Japan;
- When judicial use of corporal punishment went away, so also did the control of whole groups (not all groups) of students;
- We should never have more than four weeks off at any time;

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"The public school system is a large community because it impacts all areas and types of communities and businesses."

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- Students should be responsible for cleaning every school before they leave at the end of every day – it teaches responsibility and saves money;
- We can do more education for a few students if we change our whole subculture about human worth to what takes place in many countries around the world;
- Our students can do more work in nearly every class;
- Expecting schools and students to make several system changes at once in the same amount of time is flawed thinking;
- Making more than one change at a time means you can't measure the success of either/any of the changes;
- There are too many changes taking place in Oregon education today to be able to measure the success of any of the changes;

- Focus...focus...focus;
- Narrow the range and amount of change;
- There are 6<sup>th</sup> graders in every district who are ready for algebra;
- There are few secondary teachers who are ready to teach 6<sup>th</sup> graders algebra;

- There are many students who will be responsible community citizens and never have a need for higher level math – my well-educated brother and sister are among those;
- There is always a need for more science (my bias);
- The advantage and flaw of small communities is the same. Positive or negative things can happen instantly;
- The advantage and flaw of large communities is positive or negative things take time to change;
- The public school system is a large community because it impacts all areas and types of communities and businesses;
- With the plethora of changes being made, we are treating and expecting the public school system to respond as a small community. It won't work that way. In the end, no one will ever be able to say what happened or why;
- There are many good things in what we are being asked to do.

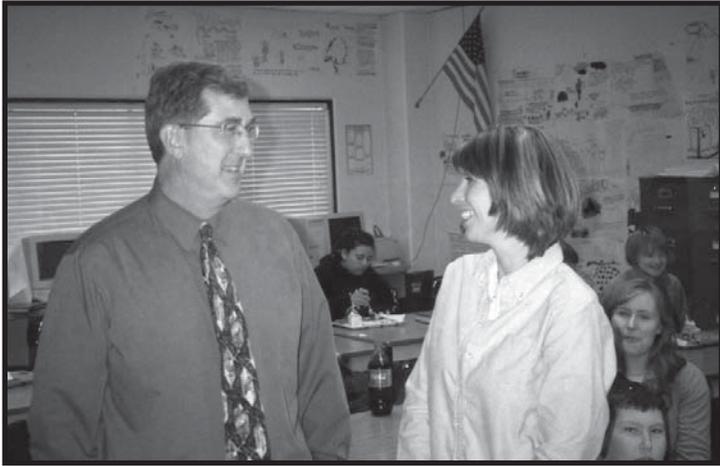
I could write a book but it would put everyone to sleep.

# Public? Private? Mt. Angel grateful for both

A number of public school systems in Oregon were actually once private schools owned by churches or groups of local citizens — but few more recently than in Mt. Angel. While the influence of the Catholic Church is still very much a major presence in this Willamette Valley community of 3,700, the Church has turned over the running of the local schools to a public board.

The roots of the Catholic Church go deep into the history of the community. The Mt. Angel Abbey was built by Swiss Benedictine monks and stands on a 300-foot bluff overlooking the town and the valley around it. Meanwhile, the Benedictine Sisters also are very much a presence in the community, providing many social services, including a care center.

The Mt. Angel School District first came into existence in 1883 when a one-room school was constructed. A parochial school was added 10 years later. The first St. Mary's School was built in 1901 and a larger model was built in 1920. No one quite remembers what happened to first public school, but at some point St. Mary's School housed both the parochial and the public schools with one floor public and one floor Catholic. This occurred until 1967 when the entire building became a public school leased to the district by the Catholic Church. Mt. Angel Middle School also was opened in 1967. The elementary school is now housed in a new building, but the district has retained the name St. Mary's School.



Mt. Angel Superintendent Bob Young visits with FFA Advisor Johnie Van Riper during a meeting of the new Mt. Angel FFA Chapter.

As far back as 1887, Mt. Angel College consisted of four years of high school and two years of college for boys. Mt. Angel College eventually turned into a four-year college, with high school existing in original facilities. In 1959, the town built Mt. Angel Preparatory School for boys (now Kennedy High School). Education for girls paralleled that of the boys for many years. Just one year after the fathers opened Mt. Angel College, Mt. Angel Academy was opened, and housed at the current Queen of Angels Priory (located on the Sisters Benedictine campus). In 1964, the Archdiocesan high school opened as a coeducational school. The Church closed the school in 1969, and the building stood empty for a year. The community rallied and voted to have its own public high school, and opened in the fall of 1970 as John F. Kennedy High School.

If it all becomes a little confusing, Superintendent Bob Young says it is simply part of the unique fabric and community climate that makes Mt. Angel a great place to live and work.

Young also is grateful for the stability which Mt. Angel offers. After teaching for 13 years in Salem, he became principal/superintendent at Sodaville in Linn County for two years before it fell victim to consolidation. He went from there to Mari-Linn where he served a year before it, too, was consolidated with North Santiam. He then served for six years as personnel and special education director at North Santiam before coming to Mt. Angel.

In his current position, Young points with pride to several outstanding accomplishments in the district, including the ELL program, which serves an overall student population that is about 5 percent Russian and 45 percent Hispanic. The elementary school is a minority/majority school. One of Young's challenges with the ELL program is making sure the district has enough highly-qualified teachers to serve the needs of the students.

He is pleased that the population is becoming less transient, although it remains an issue, so that the staff can become more focused in helping students with their academic needs. Mt. Angel is surrounded by a large nursery industry that is providing year-round employment opportunities for families. In addition, the district is having particular success getting minority parents more involved at the elementary level. Young is convinced this growing involvement will gradually move up the line to the middle school and the high school.

The district also is pushing literacy at all levels. Young gets involved very directly with the assessment of students. The Mt. Angel staff went through the entire student body assessing the students and Young was personally involved at the grassroots level with this process.

Also new at Mt. Angel is the vocational agriculture program that was reinstated after many years. The district has hired a new teacher, Johnie Van Riper out of Oregon State University, and the FFA is up and running with widespread student involvement.

Young is very much an advocate for small schools. He says the best thing about small districts is being able to get to know the staff and students in a meaningful way.

# Amity superintendent deserves commendation

The Oregon Small Schools Association has many ardent supporters but few more dedicated than Amity Superintendent Reg McShane who is not only a past president, but remains one of OSSA's most dedicated workers.

This year he is getting special recognition because the area he represents on the OSSA Board, Region Two, now has 100 percent membership. He has worked hard to make sure the districts in his area are aware of the value of participation.

McShane is a particularly valuable asset to OSSA because he has served in several areas of Oregon, including Athena-Weston, Nestucca Valley, and Oakland. This year he also is working as a liaison with Western Oregon University to frame changes in the OSSA Summer Institute.

At home in Amity, he approaches everything he does with the same level of energy and enthusiasm he brings to OSSA. Most recently, he worked with his board vice chair to lead a community forum on graduation requirements.

McShane's passion is to genuinely make a difference for students and teachers. He would love nothing more than to get rid of excess paperwork and help reduce class sizes from near 30 back to 20 so that staff members can focus on the individual needs of students.

He also has concerns about the proposed mathematics requirements — particularly as pressure mounts to direct requirements toward the college-bound.

With roots deep in vocational-technical areas, McShane is well aware of job market trends and the demand for students with technical training — not just bachelor's degrees. He clearly sees the need for instruction in both mathematics and science — but coursework and training that prepares graduates to handle the kind of problems that exist in the workplace.

McShane's concerns about loading down teachers with paperwork and non-instructional demands also extend to the administration level. Notes the veteran superintendent, "We are giving a lot of lip service to getting more resources into the classroom at the same time we are distracting our teachers with a whole array of accountability measures like audits, time reports, exhaustive assessments, paperwork, and other activities that do not represent teaching children."



Amity Superintendent Reg McShane proudly displays his new Oregon State University jacket, a gift from his office staff in honor of his tireless support for the Beaver football team.

He fears that the same thing is happening at the district level where more and more staff time has to be added to address a mounting plethora of paperwork.

As the consummate professional, McShane feels his greatest mission is to make people feel valued. He likes Amity because it is a place where he can be proud to work and educate his own children. He also likes the size of the district because he can make a difference and stay in touch and involved, including getting to know his students and what they are doing.

# Dayton poised for potential growth

Like so many communities in the upper Willamette Valley, the Dayton School District finds itself sitting quietly in the shadows of the same urban sprawl that has consumed places like Sherwood, Newberg, Dundee, and McMinnville.

Superintendent Janelle Beers, who is now in her third year, believes it is only a matter of time before the impediments to growth are removed by the miracle of modern engineering coupled with a significant infusion of cash. Urban growth boundaries and agricultural zoning of course also have something to do with it, but there has been talk of a new bridge over the Willamette River, which would easily connect Dayton with I-5 and a faster route to the greater Portland area.

Right now travelers still have to contend with the burgeoning congestion that marks its neighbors to the north. A direct route would likely make a place like Dayton very attractive for those seeking a little more peace and quiet and more reasonable housing costs.

Meanwhile, the Dayton schools continue to hum along smoothly, although, as Beers notes, they are full to the brim. A new section of kindergarten was added this year, and they are out of space district wide. A consultant was brought in to



look at these problems and a bond issue could be on the horizon in the next two to three years. The biggest need at the moment seems to be for a 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade middle school, which would provide space at both the grade school and high school.

Among the programs the district is focusing on is literacy at the junior high school — particularly content literacy to help students with their core academic subjects.

The district also is using the positive

Dayton Superintendent Janelle Beers and Dayton Elementary students look over a holiday mural.

behavior support model at the secondary level, including teacher-to-student and student-to-student reinforcement of positive choices.

At the grade school level, the district is proud of its excellent rating on its most recent report card. About 30 percent of the students represent minorities. Program development at Dayton Grade School is focused on reading and mathematics. The district also is trying to allocate some resources and attention to its TAG population.

The high school offers opportunities for credit recovery, and both the junior high and high school are addressing needs of students in the upper quartile. The district is involved in the Bridges to Achievement Program, which brings the school board into the loop on strategies for improving student achievement.

# St. Paul passes \$4 million bond measure

St. Paul Superintendent Bruce Shull already has a pretty full plate as elementary principal and superintendent in the St. Paul School District south of Newberg. Soon he also will become a project superintendent as the district prepares to spend the \$4 million bond recently approved by district voters.

For Shull, the idea of being able to address some pressing facility issues is exciting. But even more rewarding, perhaps, is the fact that the bond received 70 percent support from district voters — an indication they are happy with the way things are going in their historic district.

While it wasn't part of the campaign, voters are well aware that some of their larger neighbors, like Newberg and Woodburn, could easily swallow-up the district of 230 students. But parents in St. Paul have long valued the idea of their independent identity and the opportunities that a community school can offer.

Shull, an Oregon native, left the North Marion district to come to St. Paul as a principal. He has been superintendent/principal for the past five years.

While Shull is happy about a number of successes in the district, the bond issue is clearly the largest single achievement. The proceeds from the bond will be used to renovate both the high school and the elementary schools, provide new windows, add classroom space, and create energy efficiency.

Right now the enrollment in St. Paul is stable, but a Measure 37 challenge could change all that. An agricultural area, St. Paul is surrounded by farmland protected by land use laws. But its proximity to Portland to the north and Salem to the south makes it a potential target for development.

St. Paul also has a major parochial school influence. A school located next door to the public schools enrolls about 100 students.



St. Paul Superintendent Bruce Shull with secretary Laurel Leva.

The district has an expanding minority population. Right now about 70 of the 230 pupils are in ELL. Both a Title I and an ELL monitoring visit are commanding the attention of St. Paul staff members this winter.

St. Paul has added staff to handle the needs of its ELL population and they are excited to report that they are meeting state standards.

Also new in the district is a music program, which is very popular with the community.

## **Oregon Small School Summit** **Salem Convention Center** **Feb. 18, 2007 @ 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

Never has it been more critical for the voice of small schools to be heard in Salem. Plan to be a part of the Small School Summit and plan to stay over for the COSA-OSBA Legislative Conference, which begins at 3 p.m. on Feb. 18 and runs through the following day.

Come prepared with real-life local examples of how decisions in Salem impact your school.

To register, contact: Tami Peterson, (541) 966-3102, or e-mail [tami.peterson@umesd.k12.or.us](mailto:tami.peterson@umesd.k12.or.us).

*Sponsored by: Oregon Small Schools Association, your local ESD, COSA and OSBA.*

# OSSA Breakfast

**Oregon School  
Boards Association  
Convention**



**November 9-12,  
2006  
Portland, Ore.**