

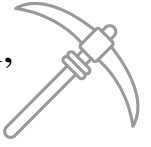
# PROSPECTOR PRIDE

April/May 2025

Volume 2 Issue 5



A publication of Grant School District 3, Grant Union Jr/Sr High School,  
Humbolt Elementary School and Seneca Elementary School



## District Survey Results Are In

Grant School District 3 strives to be a place where every student is known, empowered, and ready for the world. In order to understand the individual needs of students, the district conducted a survey of all students, employees, and parents/caregivers in October, 2025. The survey was designed to make sure students feel supported in their education, and guardians feel included and communicated with. "We want to make sure we are meeting the needs of our parents/caregivers," said Grant Union Principal Shanna Northway. "We want to improve, and to do that we need to understand where we should focus."

The survey questions included statements regarding students feeling safe, valued, and in control of their own education. Parents and students alike were asked about communication from teachers, consistent enforcement of school rules, and the approachability of the staff. Staff were asked about communication from administration and as a team, as well as questions regarding feeling supported and the balance of responsibilities.

The parent/caregiver survey included 15 questions and received 155 participants. The student survey included 20 questions, receiving 267 responses. The staff survey included 20 questions and received 95 employee responses. The parent/caregiver and employee surveys also included a space for comments to encourage the opportunity for feedback.

Northway worked with Elementary Principal Janine Attlesperger and Superintendent Mark Witty to review all of the survey results, compiling lists of what the district does well and where improvements are needed, along with the creation of goals to help achieve those

improvements. The administration presented the results at the January school board meeting. A few of the positive responses were:

- At Grant Union Jr/Sr High School, students believe their learning is important, they enjoy their electives, and they know how to get help when they have a problem. The parents feel they are treated with respect, believe their student has the necessary supplies and equipment for effective learning, and their student's learning is a high priority.
- Humbolt Elementary students believe their learning is important, their teachers challenge them to think, and they have opportunities to be successful. Parents feel they are respected at school, staff demonstrate a genuine concern for their child, and children are recognized for good work and positive behavior.
- Seneca Elementary students believe their teachers care about them, feel safe on the bus, and say their family is treated respectfully. Parents feel their child's learning is a high priority, they are treated with respect, the school positively impacts their child's growth and development, and they are proud to say they have a child at the school.
- At the Humbolt Child Care Center, parents feel respected, they are comfortable approaching school administration, and they feel the administration make decisions in the best interest of children and families.

To view the entire survey results, go to the district website at <https://www.grantschooldistrict.org> or contact the district office. Be on the lookout for the next survey, available in April, to share your feedback with the district. It's a great day to be a Prospector!

### In this Issue:

Page 1 - District Survey Results

Page 2 - Shout outs

Page 3 - Backpack Food, Student Awards

Page 4 & 5 - Alumni Updates

Page 6 - Retirees, OBOB, A Smooth Transition

Page 7 - Principal for the Day

Page 8 - Forecasting Classes, Upcoming Events

## Bus Driver Appreciation Day April 22, 2025



Grant School District 3 would like to thank all our drivers for their hard work and diligence in keeping our students safe. Did you know our buses have satellite communication devices in case of emergency? These came in handy this winter, with all students making it home safely. Thank you bus drivers!

### Levanna James a Leader in Music...

Your music teacher is incredible. I just had the opportunity to work with her at the OMEA music conference in Eugene. This is a leader in music education that is making a real difference in the life of her students. Thank you for your support of her music program.

-Ben Blessing

### Third Grade Valentines for Seniors...

Grant County Senior Programs would like to give a special shout out to Mrs. Miller's and Ms. Smoot's 3rd grade classes. The 3rd grade classes made special Valentine cards to enclose in the delivered meals for homebound seniors provided by the John Day Senior Center twice a week. These small acts of kindness offer connection and brighten someone's day. Thank you!

-Misty Palmer, Grant County Senior Programs Manager

### Congratulations Students of the Month...

GU January Students of the Month were Rhett Cox, Jayla Hatley, Timber Winegar, Cooper Ross, Zeke Rookstool, and Maddie Bailey. February Students of the Month were Karli-Anne Brandt, Danner May, Ukiah Snapp, Everett Vardanega, Pau Fuste, and Zoey Beam. These students displayed a great work ethic and positive character traits. Go Prospectors!

-Dennise Blevins, GU English Teacher

### Community Sponsor Athletics...

Grant Union athletes would like to thank each of the local businesses and community members who have sponsored gate fees for the Winter season. Fans have received free entry to sporting events as a result of the generosity from: Prospector Booster Club, Old West Federal Credit Union, Jeanette Radinovich State Farm Insurance, Patriot Plumbing, AAA Thunderbolt Fire Service Inc., 4A Stitching, Field's Tree Service, Family of Coach Don Jones, Knowles Land and Cattle, John Day Les Schwab, Studio 15 Photography, Bob and Lauri Armstrong, and Family of Charley Knowles.

-Andy Lusco, GU Vice-Principal and Athletic Director

### Team Sportsmanship Recognized...

As a parent form Irrigon High School, I would like to recognize your boys basketball team for their respect and sportsmanship. They are a great group of kids on and off the court. That also reflects on the head coach RC Huerta who needs to be recognized for the same. Please pass on my best wishes for them at the State Tournament.

-Robert Krogh



Send a shout out to staff, students or community members, by sending an email to [shoutout@grantesd.org](mailto:shoutout@grantesd.org).

### Seneca Staff Shout Outs...

• To Skip: A huge thank you to Skip for always keeping our school clean and well-maintained! Your dedication shines through every day, whether it's preparing lunches for the kids, managing recess, hanging pictures, or helping out with extra tasks in the classroom. We appreciate everything you do to keep our school running smoothly.

• To Lacey: Thank you, Lacey, for your fabulous creativity and artistic talent! Your bulletin boards are always stunning and festive, reflecting the seasons and holidays so beautifully. The way you decorate the office adds so much cheer and brings joy to everyone who walks through our doors.

• To LeAnn: A big shout out to LeAnn for her incredible work ethic! Balancing two demanding jobs—bus driving and being an instructional assistant—is no small feat, but you handle it with such energy and grace. You're like the Energizer Bunny, always going and willing to step in to help wherever needed.

• To Mrs. Sullivan: A heartfelt thank you to Mrs. Sullivan for her laser focus on supporting our students. Your thoughtful approach to meeting kids where they are and helping them grow is inspiring. Your big, creative ideas bring so much to our school and we are lucky to have you on our team.

• Thank you all for everything you do to make Seneca School an amazing place for our students and staff!

-Stacy Durych, K-2nd Grade, Seneca Elementary

### Wrestling with Sportsmanship

I just wanted to tell you how much we love and appreciate Taylor Parsons. He and my son, Jayden, have wrestled together for the last three years, at least. He's a great person on and off the mat! My family, and our entire Eagles Wrestling crew admire who he is. My honest opinion! He and the Grant Union Wrestling team are the living embodiment of what the sport is supposed to be! Thank you.

-Jacob Mcnall



# TEACHER

APPRECIATION WEEK

MAY 5-9, 2025



# Backpack Food Program Starts in Grant County

Bonni Booth has worked with Oregon's Food Hero program, through her position with OSU Extension Service as the SNAP-Ed Program Coordinator, since 2020. She is also the Every Day Matters Specialist at the Grant County Education Service District in John Day, Oregon. She spends her days supporting students around the county, finding ways to meet each student's physical and emotional needs to encourage school attendance.

The idea of a backpack program started three years ago when a local elementary student commented that he did not have access to meals outside of school. Breakfast and lunch are served four days a week, leaving long nights and weekends without food for students whose families are struggling financially.

Booth applied for the Supporting Health for All through Reinvestment (SHARE) Grant from Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization (EOCCO). These funds have been designated to help Eastern Oregon communities with housing, food security, and health equity. Once the funds were awarded, Booth arranged storage space at a local church and ordered shelves.

The next step was ordering shelf-stable foods that could be stored. Chester's Market helped keep the funds local by arranging bulk pricing and ordering cases of food. Easy, kid-friendly foods like soups, cereals, fruit snacks and applesauce now lined the shelves, waiting to

be distributed. Booth clarified the program is not intended to take away from the provision of a family but strives to "help supplement the home's existing food resources."

Grant County Health Department made a large donation, expanding to include hygiene items such as body wash, dish soap, etc.

Blue Mountain Hospital donated the proceeds from their canned food drive, and employees are encouraged to volunteer in the community through Wellness Community time. Several Blue Mountain Hospital employees have used these volunteer hours to fill food bags for the backpack program. Bags were delivered to teachers at each Grant County school that chose to participate, ready to be sent home when a student needs help.

The program has slowly settled in over the past few years. Booth tracks how many pounds of food are distributed, ordering food to be directly delivered to some schools, where school employees help by filling bags and administering them to students. Booth also orders food to be stored on hand, where ESD employees and the school resource officer are the main deliverers of filled food bags.

Booth is optimistic that the backpack food program is making a difference in the lives of students and their families, and she continues to look for ways to help families succeed and thrive in Grant County.



Left: Backpack food pantry storage, ready to be handed out. Right: Ms. Bonni visits a Humbolt Elementary third-grade classroom to promote healthy habits with Food Hero.

## American Legion Auxiliary Americanism Essay Contest

2025 Theme: What does America the Beautiful mean to me  
(regarding veterans/military)?

Congratulations to the following writers:

### 3rd Grade

1st - Finley Armichardy  
2nd - William Archibald  
3rd - Alaine Van Loo

### 5th Grade

1st - Samantha Reitz  
2nd - Shaylynn Kerr  
3rd - Temperence Daylong

### 4th Grade

1st - Weston Lieuallen  
2nd - Kaycee Delano  
3rd - Jaykeb Williams

### 6th Grade

1st - Chance  
2nd - Annabelle Raschio  
3rd - Ellie Gibson

## GU Congratulates Lilly Paddock

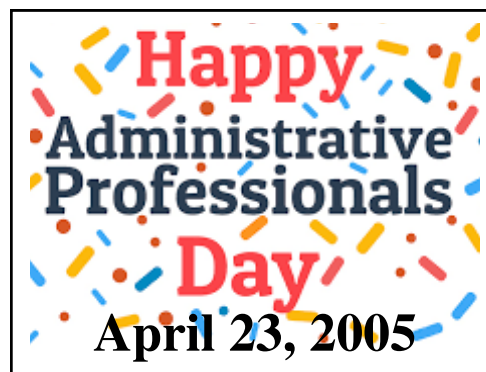


Congratulations to Lilly Paddock, on her ACE Excellence in Art Award for her work "Lill Berries" (shown above middle) in fused glass!

## Middle School Math Club 8th in State!



The Middle School Math Club headed to Pendleton for the chapter competition on February 22, 2025, taking 1st place in the team competition. In the overall individual competition, Artemis McKnab took 2nd place, and Sam Bailey took 3rd place. The team then competed at the state competition at Chemeketa Community College on March 8, 2025, finishing in 8th place. Great job, mathletes!



### Karmen Unterwegner, Class of 2003

#### **Which Grant County schools did you attend?**

I started at Humbolt Elementary School in 4th grade, Mt Vernon Middle School for 5th-6th grades, John Day Junior High School for 7th-8th grades, and 9th-12th grades at Grant Union!

#### **Do you have any favorite teachers (elementary, middle, or high school) you would like to recognize?**

I had so many incredible educators during my time in the Grant SD, too many to name. That being said, a special shout out to Mrs. Carol Kilpatrick for her mentorship and numerous letters of recommendation.

#### **Do you have any favorite school memories you would like to share?**

Something I think about often, is how important the school system is in communities like John Day. It's a social hub for everyone with sports, concerts, and other events bringing people together. I was part of a (relatively) large, but close, graduating class, and I may have been nerdy but still found acceptance amongst my peers. All that to say, I remember the social aspects more than the education!

#### **What have you been up to since graduation?**

After graduating from Grant Union, I went to the University of Oregon and completed my undergraduate degree in architecture. While there I had the good fortune of getting to study in Italy and Australia, and it cemented my desire to see the world. When I was getting ready to graduate, I also knew that I wanted to get back into the community service that had been part of my life while growing up in John Day, so I joined the Peace Corps. Those two years in Mali turned into three and then a career trajectory that took me to nine other African countries (and counting) as well as getting my Masters in Public Health at Emory University. I'm now in my sixth year at The Carter Center as an Associate Director, where I support programs to better understand how effective they are and how they can become more so.

#### **Any other thoughts or information you would like us to know?**

I would just like to encourage students to think big. Growing up in a small, rural town can still afford opportunities to see the world if that's what you want. I know the life I chose is not for everyone, but it's been pretty incredible. It all started in Eastern Oregon with friends, family, and a community that encouraged me to explore and be curious. My small town roots have been great preparation for a lot of the work that I do today.



Where are you now? We would love to hear from all of our alumni! Reach out to us by e-mail at [shoutout@grantesd.org](mailto:shoutout@grantesd.org) or call the district office at 541-575-1280.



## Micah Sprouffske, Class of 2007

Micah graduated with a BA from the University of Oregon, as a triple major in archaeology, linguistics and Chinese. He completed his MA at Eastern Oregon University and Wuhan University in Hubei, China. His graduate research was composed of two different projects titled, "EOU-Bilingual Education in Elementary Education" and "WU-Comparative Global Mythos of the Crow as portrayed in the 'Shenwu Fu.'" At the University of Haifa, Micah conducted research focused on how culture affects second language acquisition in elementary education. We caught up to Micah in Seattle, where he is working on his PhD in Chinese Linguistics at the University of Washington. Here is what he had to say:



### **Which Grant County schools did you attend?**

I attended Humbolt Elementary School through the 3rd-grade and then was home schooled until I started Grant Union High School in 9th grade.

### **Do you have any favorite teachers (elementary, middle, or high school) you would like to recognize?**

There were so many teachers that each moved through my life, and I would like to thank all of them for their work in shaping my enjoyment of learning and desire to continue to pursue higher education. My kindergarten teacher, Susie Garrison, is one I will make a note of. She was the beginning of my school years. Then, when I was preparing to work with students in Grant County, her fifth grade classroom was the first classroom I set foot in.

### **Do you have any favorite school memories you would like to share?**

Several of my teachers were taught by my grandmother, and I can remember coming into the classroom and having them tell me stories of their experiences underneath my grandmother, Frieda Sprouffske.

### **What have you been up to since graduation?**

I am currently inhabiting a small room in Seattle while I attend the University of Washington, working on my PhD in Chinese Linguistics. Since I graduated from Grant Union, I have had the opportunity to experience many different positions, my favorite of which was working with students throughout Grant County.

## Alumni PFC Riddick Hutchison “Sets the Standard”



Alumni Riddick Hutchison (Class of 2023) was recently honored for his teamwork and marksmanship in the Battle Company 5th Battalion Feb. 2025 Newsletter



“PFC Hutchison is currently a M240 machine gunner in our Weapons squad. PFC Hutchison (AKA Hutch) is an exceptional soldier and important part of our team. During our Company Live Fire training, PFC Hutch and his gun team were integral in the success of not only our Platoon mission, but the company mission as well. His ability to accurately and rapidly employ his weapon system sets the standard for others to follow.”

# Celebration of Retirees

## District Retirees, Longtime Employees and Former Board Members to Gather May 3rd

Grant School District 3 is planning the first annual dinner celebration for district retirees, longtime employees and former board members. This event will be held on Saturday, May 3, 2025, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., in the Grant Union Commons. Registration will begin at 4:00 p.m., followed by dinner and a recognition program.

School board members Kris Beal, Chris Labhart, and Jake Taylor have been working with Superintendent Mark Witty to plan the event. The committee's first task was to build a database of names and contact information. Retiree Rachelle Simmons has been building the database.

Future Business Leaders of America students (FBLA) have taken on the task of creating the invitations and mailing them out. The students will be setting-up for the evening, preparing dinner, and serving dinner as a FBLA fundraiser. FBLA advisors: Ms. Kalli Wilson, Business teacher, and Mrs. Heather Rookstool, Special Education Secretary/Commons Supervisor, will be working with the students throughout the project.

Invitations with an RSVP were mailed out in March and are due back to the district by April 10. If you would like more information about this celebration, or you did not receive an invitation, please call Kris Beal at 541-932-4892.

## Battle of the Books

By Samantha Reitz, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Student

This year, 16 kids from 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grades came together to read 16 books in four months. In October, they split into four teams to prepare for the local Battle of the Books competition. Teams competed by answering questions from the required reading and the winning team earned the opportunity to represent Humbolt Elementary at the Regional Battle of the Books Competition.

The four teams included: the Mighty Bananas (Merit Waley, Skylar Billar, Azalea Gabbard, and Everleigh Gibson); the Dogs (Kenneth Hollowell, Weston Moulton

Ezra Randleas, and Owen Armstrong); the Wild Readers (Finley Armichardy, Agnes Bailey, Rosie Kerr, and Sydney Reitz); and the G.O.A.T.s (Samantha Reitz, Shaylynn Kerr, Penelope Green, and Cleome McKnab).

The G.O.A.T.s won the local competition and represented Humbolt Elementary at Regionals in Culver on March 1, 2025. They competed against 20 other schools and brought home second place. Great job!



5<sup>th</sup> graders Samantha Reitz, Shaylynn Kerr, Penelope Green, and Cleome McKnab, pictured with coach Tawnya Reitz at the Regional Battle of the Books Competition.

## Welcoming the Greenwood Family: A Smooth Transition to Our Community

By Shanna Northway, Grant Union Jr/Sr High Principal

John Day is known for its close-knit, welcoming atmosphere, and that small-town charm is exactly what drew the Greenwood family to our district. John and Nicole Greenwood, along with their son Gunner, recently relocated from a much larger school district—one with nearly 1,700 students—to our community.

When asked what brought them to John Day, the Greenwoods shared, “We’ve always loved Eastern Oregon. Both of us spent time here as kids with our families, and we’ve always been drawn to the small-town vibe.”

Like any big move, the transition came with some challenges. “The transfer process was a little stressful—but moving always is!” Nicole noted. “Other than that, everything has gone really smoothly so far.”

One of the biggest concerns was how Gunner would adjust to a new school. Moving from a much larger

district, he was understandably a little nervous. However, his worries quickly faded. “It sounds like he has made plenty of new friends and is really enjoying being a Prospector,” his parents shared.

From the school’s perspective, Gunner’s transition has been seamless. He has quickly become involved and is a familiar face at school events—especially basketball and wrestling. His enthusiasm and positive attitude have made a great impression on both staff and students.

The Greenwoods have felt supported throughout the transition. “The school district has been great—very helpful in making sure Gunner has the help he needs and that his transition has been as smooth as possible,” they said.

We’re so glad to have the Greenwood family in our community and look forward to seeing Gunner continue to thrive. Welcome to the Prospector Family!



# Ms. Finley Armichardy Takes Over as Humbolt Principal

On January 23, 2025, Humbolt Elementary Principal Janine Attlesperger sent her staff the following letter:  
*Good morning Staff,*

*I will be stepping down as principal this morning sometime between 7:30 and 8:00 a.m. Your new principal, Finley Armichardy, will take over at that point. This year's Principal for the Day is very ambitious and would like to spend the majority of her day being a Service Leader to teachers. If there is anything you need from her, please do not hesitate to ask. She will have a small budget to make sure you are "encouraged" throughout your day.*

*Her tentative schedule is as follows:*

*Arrival: Greet Students*

*8:05 Security walk-through and check-ins with custodial, kitchen and office staff*

*9:35 Recess with peers*

*9:50 Classroom walk-throughs*

*11:20 Principal lunch with a few students; recess with peers*

*12:00: Planning for improvement opportunities based on her walk-throughs and work on Afternoon Assembly slides*

*1:30 Recess with peers*

*1:45 Flexible time to complete unfinished projects for the day. I hope to squeeze in a visit with Mr. Witty.*

*3:00 Afternoon Assembly*

*I will be available via my cell if you need me to step into the principal role today. Otherwise, enjoy your new principal! I anticipate great things from this young lady!*

Fifteen students participated in this year's Principal for the Day essay competition. "Finley was chosen based on her ideas and grade-level conventions, and alignment with our school's values," said Attlesperger.

During her time as principal, Armichardy:

- Went to all staff and asked how they were doing and if they had any concerns
- Turned up the heat in the lobby for the morning drop-off so it wasn't so cold in the office
- Helped Mr. Huerta improve parent communication by suggesting paper fliers for events instead of just virtual, and approved the fliers when complete

- Conducted classroom walk-throughs and helped teachers problem-solve
- Launched the Junior Self-Manager program by distributing packets and explaining the program to all 2nd-4th grade classes
- Planned and led the afternoon assembly
- Met with Mr. Witty about remodeling the office and other positive changes for the school
- Made two signs for the cafeteria to remind students of expectations and ordered them for printing

Here is a copy of Miss Finley's essay:

*If I were principal for a day I would always help the school. I would listen to every idea. I would be kind and respectful to others. I think everyone can be a principal if they work hard enough. I would be Safe, Respectful, and Responsible. I would check in with everyone and see how they are doing. I would greet everyone I see and tell them to have a good day. I would ask some people about their day and tell them to have a good evening.*

*I would listen to everyone when they talk. I would tell them they are doing great and encourage them to keep going. I would tell teachers they are awesome. I will give them a high five or an encouraging smile. I would make sure they are not overwhelmed or anything. I would make sure they don't need anything. I would make sure their day is going well. I would pair the self managers with junior self managers and the self manager will teach the jr. self managers what it means to be a self manager.*

*I would stop everything to answer everyone who talks to me. I would have a 6th and 3rd pair to read together every Thursday. I would let some kids go out to recess a little bit early. I think I should be chosen because I will follow our school policy. That is why I want to be a principal for a day.*

Congratulations Principal for the Day Finley Armichardy!



## Students Caught Being Kind

Humbolt Elementary students in third through sixth grades took a survey on their school experience. These students expressed concern that other students were not always kind or respectful to each other. The leadership team took action, creating a Kindness Card Program.

Teachers give Kindness Cards to students when they are caught being kind to others. Students write their name on the card and put it in the Blue Kindness Tub in their quad of classrooms.

Each Thursday, one card is drawn from each quad. Those students receive a prize at the assembly and a Kindness Trophy they get to have on their desk for the week.

Each week, winning students bring their trophy back to the assembly and present it to the next Kindness winner.

At the end of the month, winning students celebrate their kindness with a Kindness Party during lunch.

Grant School District 3  
401 N Canyon City Blvd  
Canyon City, OR 97820

PRSRT STD  
ECRWSS  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
EDDM RETAIL

LOCAL  
POSTAL CUSTOMER

Congratulations Humbolt  
Elementary students for  
achieving over 90%  
attendance in the first  
semester! In School Every  
Day is the Prospector Way!

## The Importance of Forecasting Classes

By Tonia Seebart, Career Coordinator, Grant Union Jr/Sr High School

Students and parents, it may seem like next year is far away, but planning your classes now can make a big difference in your academic success. Forecasting your schedule is more than just picking classes—it's about setting yourself up for graduation, college, and your future career.

Taking the time to carefully choose your courses now can make your next school year smoother and more fulfilling. We are implementing a process that allows you to think ahead, talk to your counselors, and make informed decisions that set you up for success!

For additional information on forecasting classes, visit <https://guhs.grantschooldistrict.org> or call the school office for an appointment.

Join us for a

# Kindergarten GOLD RUSH

to welcome

## incoming Kindergarteners

Thursday, April 24, 2025  
from 5:00–7:00 pm  
Humbolt Elementary

Bring your family for dinner, games,  
meeting some staff, and registering your  
child for Kindergarten



## BOOSTER CLUB ALUMNI GOLF TOURNAMENT

To Sign-up your team call  
541-390-5790

RAFFLE  
ITEMS TO  
WIN



Sunday  
June 1st,  
2025

John Day  
Golf Course  
9 holes  
played

Entry  
\$200/Team

BBQ  
Lunch will  
be served after