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Eastmont Says Goodbye to Garn Christensen

By DOMINICK BONNY

This year marks the end of 38 years in public education, 15 of which were spent as the superintendent of the Eastmont School District, for Dr. Garn Christensen.

When he came to Eastmont, he was the fifth superintendent in eight years.

"I didn't know if it was a position I would be successful in or if it was going to be the right fit," Christensen said. "Fortunately for me, it worked out. There are a lot of good people here. It's a beautiful area. It has been an honor to work in this community."

As for the legacy of leadership he leaves behind, he said being a good administrator means listening to people and supporting them, but also looking to the future.

He said he hopes his influence has had a positive impact on the culture of Eastmont schools. "They say culture is what you protect and promote, and I think that's really important in organizations, school districts, and even families," he said.

He said the information we gain today makes us better tomorrow, and that he believes the best conversations are those that change your opinion or add to your opinion. And there's potential for that to

happen every day in public schools.

"I think public education in our country is one of the foundation pillars of our community, and I think that the whole democratic process is one where we share different opinions. Schools force individuals from all different backgrounds to come



Garn Christensen has served in public education for over 38 years. Here is his first official photo as superintendent of Eastmont in 2007.

together, in kindergarten classrooms and graduation stages, on teams and on plays. It makes us understand and appreciate those differences."

The fact that students get second and third chances to write their own futures,

(continued, page 2)

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Kayla Brown
Exec. Director of Human Resources
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Section 504 Coordinator
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New Superintendent Begins in June



After an extensive process, the Eastmont School District Board of Directors concluded their superintendent search and offered the position to Dr. Becky Berg.

Dr. Berg began her professional career as a middle school teacher in the Renton School District. Her first principal role was in the Bainbridge Island School District for three years and then in the Mead School District for six years. In 2010, she was invited to serve as superintendent of the Deer Park School District and served there for three years.

In 2013, Dr. Berg became superintendent

of the Marysville School District, which serves nearly 11,000 students in 22 schools, with a staff of roughly 1,300 and a budget of \$152 million. She was in Marysville for six years.

Most recently, Dr. Berg has been the associate and interim superintendent of The American School of Dubai, which serves approximately 2,300 students from 82 countries, including children from the United States Consulate. The school was recently named the "Most Outstanding School Overall" in the United Arab Emirates.

Dr. Berg earned her doctorate in organizational leadership from Teachers College Columbia University and her superintendent's credential from Washington State University.

Dr. Berg is married and she and her husband, Grant, a retired firefighter, have three grown children.

Goodbye to Garn Chistensen

(cont. from page 1)

rather than being tracked early on, is one of the things he admires most about the American education system.

The mayor of East Wenatchee, Jerrilea Crawford, said she is going to miss Dr. Christensen's leadership in the community. Before serving as mayor, Crawford worked for the Wenatchee Valley Chamber of Commerce and facilitated the Community Leadership class. She regularly invited Christensen to speak to her students, and at Chamber events.

"What I appreciated about Garn's leadership was he wasn't just involved in school activities, he wanted to participate on the business side.

He attended business networking events and discussions because that was relevant to education. No other superintendent in the valley has done that as consistently."

As mayor, she said she's grateful for Christensen's strong leadership, and his willingness to talk about issues across the board. She said working with him on getting a school resource officer, or SRO, in Eastmont schools would not have been possible without his leadership and attention to detail.

"The relationship between the city and the school district is really important because it's like a community inside our community. We aligned really well that it needed to be the right person for the right reasons and I think we accomplished

that together. We wouldn't have been able to do that without him."

As far as advice for parents, Christensen said he thinks it's never been more difficult to be a parent. He said the access to information and exposure to society through technology has never been easier. At the same time, the expectations placed on young people have never been greater.

"I think the basic ingredient that parents still provide is that daily connection with their child," he said. "Daily touch, daily listening, being present – we all need to realize that we only get to do parenting once. There aren't chances to rewrite that script. Stay connected with your kids."



Garn worked as the teacher/only employee for a one-room K-8 school in Idaho in the late 80's while working on his masters in education administration at the College of Idaho. The district provided him a 2-bedroom teacherage for his family to live in and garden space they plowed with a road grader. Garn is pictured in the plaid shirt on the left.

'Community' in the Graduation Equation

By GARN CHRISTENSEN

This is my 38th year in schools as an educator and final newsletter as Eastmont's Superintendent. Observing student success, and mishaps, during my career lead me to offer a few observations. First, families and communities that play, travel, and experience things together tend to grow young people with better physical, social and emotional health, and future success. These events don't need to be world travel tours or expensive weekends, but just time playing ball, board games, camping in the backyard or nearby mountains and deserts, and perhaps an occasional road trip to visit family and friends.

Conversations are critical. As a teacher, I observe the facial gestures, eyes, and tone of voice as well as how my words and information are being received. Yes, computers, smartphones, emojis, and memes can do amazing stuff, but only a face and eyes can truly smile. People also tend to be bit more forgiving than electronics where everything is logged with no room for error.

One caring adult is all a young person needs. Yes, two are nice, three or four are great, and a community full of extended family and friends is magnificent, but one caring adult can mean the world to a young person. For me, there was a year in my teens where the adult who knew where I was and what I was up to was Mickey Ibarra, a dedicated and creative teacher at Nebo Alternative High School.

Thirty years later, I found Dr. Ibarra leading a respected public affairs firm in Washington DC and personally thanked him. I could tell he didn't really remember me, as I was but one of many needy teens in his educational career. But I never forgot his ability to connect with the very basics of my life during that year, such as: Did I have a place to sleep? Enough to eat? Warm clothes for the winter? I was on my own and working full-time during my high school years and had those things covered, but he was my one emergency contact who I knew would show up if needed.

I challenge all you as parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and family friends to take the time to be a caring adult in the life of a young person. Show you care by showing up at school events the student is involved in and find out who the performers and players are. You can offer to help with your time or donate resources if you are so inclined. These young people will be your neighbors and leaders before you know it. As we know, life is more about what you give than what you get.

DISTRICT UPDATES

New Superintendent

When asked earlier in the year who should be the next Eastmont superintendent, I offered, "The person who wants the job the most." Not because of the salary or position, but who sees themselves as thriving in this community. It is an assignment that has a high turnover rate in any community. For a person to even begin finding success, they must enjoy the region and not wake up wishing they were somewhere else. I know Dr. Berg and believe she fits that description and wish her all the best as Eastmont's new superintendent.

Finances

Frequently, it is suggested that Eastmont get grants to help pay for educational programs or purchases. If you look under the District's Goal 6 – Management Support, you will see Strategy 9: The maximum amount of federal and state resources shall be obtained by administrators and supervisors with recognition of long-term district shared costs.

A review of our annual budget will identify over \$10 million in additional revenue thanks to carefully written academic program, instructional equipment, and school facility construction grants, along with extensive data reporting. These grants are primarily written and managed by district office and building administrators along with business support staff. The majority of these grants are federal, though we also receive additional state funds and the occasional local foundation grant.

Reconfiguration and Attendance Area Revisions

Before the start of this school year, hundreds of students and staff moved as we transitioned from K-4 to K-5 elementary schools and from one to two junior high schools. This process will be completed with the start of the 2022-23 school year as all elementary schools expand to serve K-6 and both junior highs will offer programs for grades 7-9.

Enrollment and community growth forecasts continue to show this configuration of students in our schools will provide growth capacity at all levels for the next 10+ years for Eastmont.

Superintendent's Message: It's Been an Honor

During the summer of 1989, I was completing my principal certification at the College of Idaho in Boise and took my three young children on a drive through Central Washington. Our search was for a rural region that met family and professional goals. Several communities in Eastern Washington ended up on the "A" list of places to move to.

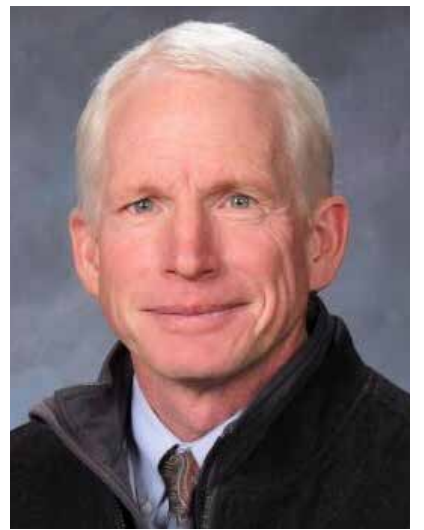
Over a decade later, it was then 2002 and Eastmont was advertising for a superintendent. Prior to submitting my application, I drove half a day from my current superintendent assignment in Chewelah and walked Eastmont's campuses and around the community. My paperwork was submitted and about a month later the call came that I was not selected for an interview.

Five years later, it was New Year's weekend in 2007 when I again spent a day walking Eastmont's campuses with the interim superintendent, Tom Pickett. In his usual, very direct manner, Mr. Pickett identified both the challenges facing the next superintendent, as well as the many strengths of the community and region.

Once again, I submitted my paperwork and a month later was invited to interview in Eastmont. On March 12, 2007, Dixie Randall, Jan Cetto, Chris Gibbs, Annette Eggers, and Brad Hawkins (now State Senator Hawkins), approved and signed my first Eastmont Superintendent's contract. Since that contract, 13 additional contracts were signed as new board members Cindy Wright, Steve Piccirillo, Dave Piepel, Whitney Smith, Meaghan Vibbert, Joy Dawe, and Jason Heinz were elected to serve Eastmont.

Over these past fifteen years, my signature has shown up as Eastmont's superintendent on employee and vendor checks, contracts, evaluations, student and employee documents and meeting agendas.

The educators, employees, students, parents, families, coaches, and community members in this region are exceptional and the area offers more than can be experienced in a lifetime. As this is my last newsletter, thank you for trusting me with your children and tax dollars. It has been an honor.



COVID Update

Similar to other diseases, COVID will continue to be something we all hope to avoid, similar to heart disease, cancer or other serious illnesses. As of now, it appears our nation, state, and county have moved to isolate and protect our most vulnerable. This policy is one that is commonly used with other disease outbreaks once our health providers

learn who is most susceptible to the illness. It also asks that each of us take responsibility to mask, distance, etc. if we have health issues that might be aggravated by a new illness. Eastmont's current COVID cases are available on our district website at eastmont206.org. Click on the COVID resources link at the top right on the navigation menu.

Construction & Facilities

The Eastmont Board is committed to continuing a building program of offering to our community the best possible educational facilities. Schools experience some of the hardest use there is and public buildings are always needing repair, paint, new flooring and constant preventative maintenance.

At the same time, our board is also tasked with looking into the future and ensuring plans are in place for growth and modernization of current schools. As of today, the board has obtained over \$5,600,000 in state construction funds to help build a new transportation facility at the corner of Grant Road and Perry Avenue. This facility will be a multi-district

cooperative as it will also provide service for other school districts' buses and vehicles.

The board has directed the preparation of a bond proposal to complete Phase 2 with the modernization of Kenroy, Lee, Cascade, and Rock Island Elementary schools as well as build the transportation center and do other major safety and athletic improvements. Knowing that both land and construction costs have recently escalated, the board is carefully examining the tax impact on district property owners. Their goal is to not increase rates, but rather maintain a similar rate for annual local school taxes paid on Eastmont homes and businesses.



'Hats Off' to Garn!



"I want to make the Yarn for Garn everywhere you stop. Happy trails until we cross paths again."



Eastmont School District has been very fortunate to have Dr. Garn Christensen's steady leadership for the past 15 years. He led us through years of incredible student growth, a major recession, and a pandemic. Through it all, we always knew we could count on him.

We could count on him to be physically present at our events, in our classrooms and on our buses. He filled his Friday afternoons with bus rides where he would talk with students, listen to our drivers and view our growing and diverse community. On payday, he would walk the whole district, handing out paychecks and employee newsletters to hundreds of Eastmont staff. During the evenings, we would see him with hat in hand visiting soccer matches, choir performances, STEM events and talking with our students at the fair.

We could count on him to make decisions that would serve the students, staff and community well into the future. The issues that arrive on a superintendent's desk are complex to say the least. Garn kept us off of the "bleeding edge" of initiatives to ensure what we implemented was well researched and a proven educational program. He kept us compliant with state and federal laws. And he was willing to make the right decision even if it wasn't the popular one at the time.

Lastly, we could count on him to prepare us for what was ahead. He conducted surprise drills and partnered with first responders to ensure we were ready if and when an emergency occurred. He worked with the community to plan and implement construction bonds, making sure we had durable and functional facilities that were safe and promoted learning. He watched population and construction trends to ensure we had the right amount of staff to serve our students. And finally, he prepared us to transition to a new superintendent this summer.

Thank you, Garn, for serving the students, staff, and community of Eastmont so well!



"Happy retirement to the Big Dog!"



"The one word that's always stuck with me about you is 'integrity.' You are who you are no matter what or who you are dealing with."



"You were calm and always stated the facts and always kept us in the loop. I always knew where you stood and I appreciated that."

"What great memories! You've done an awesome job, not just for our school but our whole community."



View the District's Thank You video for Garn at: cutt.ly/thankyougarn



'Day of the Child' Connects Parents, Kids with Outdoor Activities

By DOMINICK BONNY



Children climb in the lift bucket from a Douglas PUD service truck while parents learn about dialing 811 at the first annual Day of the Child event held at Eastmont Community Park.

Hundreds of people gathered at Eastmont Community Park on April 23 for Eastmont's Day of the Child, or Dia del Niño.



Tacos Chava provided tacos and Coca-Cola provided drinks free of charge to participants.

It was actually a surprisingly large turnout, according to Mayra Navarro-Gomez, assistant director of special programs for Eastmont.

Navarro-Gomez said the event was put together by Eastmont Pack Parent reps to give families and students an opportunity to spend quality time outdoors.

"The goal for us with this event is to ensure that our families can spend a quality day outdoors with their children while getting direct access to community resources," Navarro-Gomez said. "Students get to play different games throughout the stations and best of all - students get a prize."

The free event was also made possible due to the generosity of vendors and supporters like the Douglas County PUD, Columbia Valley Community Health, and Coca-Cola, as well as many others.

Tacos Chava was also there and donated tacos and other authentic Mexican food, as well as their time, to feed the crowd. Navarro-Gomez thanked Don Chava and his crew for their support and for making sure no one went home hungry.

Eastmont staff members also showed up to help out, donating their time to make sure everything ran smoothly. Matt Charlton, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education, was on the soccer field helping children of all ages line up shots on goal.

After they put the ball in the back of the net, some with a little help, each child received a prize.

View Day of the Child video at: cutt.ly/dayofthechild



Mayra Navarro-Gomez, Asst. Director of Special Programs

Annual STEM Egg Drop Sees Record Participation

By DOMINICK BONNY

The annual STEM Egg Drop Competition at Eastmont Junior High School is back after a two-year hiatus. The group of second graders that converged upon the school was the biggest ever, according to Angie Velazquez.

Velazquez, K-6 STEM coordinator for the Eastmont School District, was in charge of making sure the return of this beloved event went smoothly.

"This year was the biggest group, we had about 178 competing," she said.

All the competitors are second graders from all 6 Eastmont elementary schools.

"We really highlight collaboration and teamwork because that's a skill they have to work on when they move on to upper high school level and then careers," she said.

But it's not just the academic high

achievers who benefit from and engage in the competition. From drafting their egg-protection designs on paper to fabricating the egg-protection units and then watching them put to the test, the competition gives learners of



Angie Velazquez, K-6 STEM coordinator

all different styles something to sink their teeth into.

"They build it and then test it and just like anything else, if it doesn't work then you redesign," Velazquez said.

She said creating situations where students work as a team and have to deal with failure is beneficial in teaching lifelong lessons.

The goal of the competition is to have the last unbroken egg in the gym. The drops begin at a relatively low height, released by Eastmont staff members standing on ladders. By the time the last few surviving egg-protection designs are being put to the test, the drops require the aid of a maintenance staff member and a scissor lift raised almost to the ceiling of the gym.

"STEM careers are such a huge part of our future," Velazquez said. "And so getting them thinking about what it takes to be a STEM thinker" is incredibly important for preparing them for potential future careers.

She said she didn't see a sad face



178 second graders from all 6 Eastmont elementary schools competed in this year's annual STEM Egg Drop Competition.

the entire day and she's grateful to the STEM coaches for preparing their students so well.

"I have awesome staff members that participate with this program and the feedback I get from them (is huge)," she said. "Not only with what goes well but also how we can improve (is great) because I want Eastmont to have the best STEM program out there."

View the STEM Egg Drop video at: cutt.ly/eggdrop



Clovis Point Students Surpass Read-A-Thon 20,000 Minute Goal

By DOMINICK BONNY

The inflatable suits were out and the mood was festive at Clovis Point Elementary, as students and staff celebrated going above and beyond their goal in the first-ever Clovis Point Read-A-Thon.

Clovis Point PTO President Laine Heikel was joined by her comically-inflated friends, one a T-Rex and the other a Pink Unicorn, on a tour of the classrooms in April to hand out prizes and laud students for a job well done.

"Today we are celebrating a big



Laine Heikel, Clovis Point PTO president, said Clovis students raised over \$9,000 during the Read-A-Thon.

milestone that we achieved with our Read-A-Thon," Heikel said.

"Our first-ever Read-A-Thon here at Clovis and the kids set a goal of 20,000 minutes read, and they exceeded that."

They read 21,168 minutes in two weeks and raised more than \$9,000 for the PTO and everyone is really proud of the students, Heikel said.

Mrs. Dorey in the T-Rex outfit and Mr. Garcia in the Pink Unicorn, the trio wound their way through the school, handing out prizes and delighting the students.



Clovis students, joined by T-Rex and a pink unicorn, receive recognition for their contribution to the schoolwide Read-A-Thon. Students exceeded their goal and read over 21,000 minutes.

View the Read-A-Thon video at: cutt.ly/clovisreadathon



Spring Athletics Update - Go Cats!

By RUSS ALMAN

The weather may not have been very cooperative this spring, but Eastmont still had a great sports season.

Congratulations to Ladycat Softball, head coach Cliff Johnson and his staff for capturing their first Big 9 League championship! They tied with Moses Lake as co-champions.

The boys soccer team won against

Sunnyside on May 14, capturing the second berth to State for District 6. Congratulations to the boys, head coach Vidal Hurtado and his staff on a great season.

Unified Sports was back and our unified soccer team was able to play a few matches.

At the time of this writing, our tennis squad and boys and girls golf teams were competing at Districts.

We hosted day one of Districts for track and field on Thursday, May 19 at Wildcat Stadium. Day two was held in Yakima on Saturday, May 21.

This summer, we are holding sports programs to get kids ready for the 2022-23 school year. In addition to our high school programs, we will be offering strength training and conditioning for 7-8 graders. Parents received an update



Ladycat Softball won their first Big 9 League championship this season and are competing for a berth in the state playoffs.

on the programs through ParentSquare. If you missed it, please contact the high school athletics office for more information.

Also, please note that we have moved away from FamilyID for athletics registration and have replaced it with FinalForms. Check ParentSquare for details on how to access the new system or contact us at the athletic office. Fill out the forms online, upload proof of your child's physical and you'll be ready to register for upcoming sports.

For the latest sports updates, visit Eastmont Wildcats on Facebook and visit the Eastmont sports website at eastmontathletics.com.

View Russ Waterman's spring sports wrap-up video at: cutt.ly/spring22sports





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