

# Students prepare thousands of meals for children

## Project focuses on helping the less fortunate

A slide show of impoverished children from third world countries playing on a big screen on the cafeteria wall set the stage for a global effort at Pioneer Middle School this spring. Volunteer students and families lined cafeteria tables to package meals of rice, chicken and beans for shipment to Africa, the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

The project is linked to the *Children of the Nation* organization (<http://www.cotni.org/>) which helps feed the world's hungry children. This volunteer effort produced approximately 8,800 meals. Earlier this school year, Pioneer students organized a candle sale to pay for the food supplies.

A truck from Children of the Nations came from Seattle with all the packaging materials needed for the project. Pioneer PTA President **Holly Carrera** organized the event. She said the focus of the project was to help Walla Walla students understand the world's vast needs by making a difference for children living in extreme poverty.

"It makes me feel like I'm doing something bigger than me. We're feeding a lot of people. They are less fortunate than we are so we should appreciate all that we have because they are starving and we're not."

**Lauren Llewellyn**

*Pioneer Middle School 8th Grade Student*



Pioneer Middle School Para-Educator Christina Price-Huntington holds up her six-year-old daughter Charlie Gonzalez to pour food into the meal packet during the *Children of the Nations* effort.

Students and families packaged approximately 8,800 meals for distribution to third world countries.

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Focus on Education community  
newsletter is published  
tri-annually by  
Walla Walla Public Schools.

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Walla Walla  
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# Focus on Education

Your School District Newsletter | Spring 2010 | Volume 11 | Issue 3

## Astronaut's message: Follow your dreams

*Melvin asks parents to support their children along the journey*



NASA Astronaut **Leland Melvin** eats lunch with Green Park Elementary students as part of his visit to Walla Walla earlier this year. Melvin, who has been to space twice on the Space Shuttle and spent time in the International Space Station, tells students to follow their dreams. Melvin challenged students to commit to doing their best, listen to their parents and excel in school.

Melvin was a stand-out football athlete at the University of Richmond and was drafted by the Detroit Lions. A leg injury cut his professional football opportunities short, so he decided to further pursue his love of science. He enrolled in the University of Virginia and eventually earned a master's degree in materials science engineering which helped him land a spot on a scientific research team for NASA.

After spending nearly a decade in research for NASA, he was selected to participate in the Astronaut Candidate Training program. Melvin logged more than 565 hours in space during his 2008 and 2009 missions. He said one of the most rewarding aspects of being an astronaut is visiting schools and talking to children.

"To inspire someone, you have to be inspired. It's important for parents to continue to pursue their own dreams and be inspired; that will filter down to their children. It's all about being there to support their dreams."

**Leland Melvin**

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### District trims 2010 budget

The district is feeling the impact of the state's \$2.8 billion budget shortfall. Legislative action taken this spring reduced district funding by \$1.2 million for next school year.

The district has developed a budget savings plan for 2010-11 to balance the \$62 million general fund. The plan includes cutting three administrative positions, reducing through attrition one teaching position at Garrison Middle School, trimming school supplies funds and reducing staff professional development dollars. The district will also carry an 8% fund balance reserve to help offset future state cuts.

"This plan has limited the impact on district academic and extra-curricular programs and no permanent staff will lose their jobs," Superintendent **Rich Carter** said. "We are increasing our fund balance to protect the district's future interests in light of state revenue forecasts which indicate a continued economic downturn in the next biennium."

Our Core Values  
are more than mere words;  
they're our business!

Quality | Integrity | Accountability | Respect | Courtesy





**Rich Carter**  
Superintendent

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## Thank you for the opportunity to serve our children

After nearly 40 years of gearing up for another school year, this spring feels different as I make preparations for retirement from public education at the end of the school year.

My calling to education has been an amazing journey filled with far more ups than downs. I've always believed education is the great equalizer. Education provides opportunities and opens doors that would never be realized without the power of knowledge.

I've always strived to make the organization strong. Despite the financial challenges facing our country, Walla Walla Public Schools is fiscally sound. We have developed conservative budgets and have learned to do more with less.

We continue to find ways to help students achieve and each year our graduates are competitive. It's been a privilege and honor to be your superintendent for the past 10 years. I will always be grateful for the opportunity to serve Walla Walla's children. Thanks for all your support!

### Carter's proudest moments

- Opportunity to serve Walla Walla children
- Privilege of leading an amazing staff
- Joy of watching our parents' pride
- Professional relationship with school board
- Improved academic achievement
- Development of a dual language program
- Creation of a Skills Center partnership
- Support Services facility project
- S.E.W. Transportation Co-Op
- Fiscally sound budgets and reserves
- Hiring the right people for the job
- Successful Edison Elementary bond project
- Four-year levy for fiscal stability
- Vast support from district partners
- 37 years in the world's best profession
- District's Moody's bond rating is Aa3  
(This bond rating is better than the A1 rating the district previously held due to the fact it is a lower risk for failure.)

## Construction begins on new Support Services facility

T.W. Clark Construction, LLC broke ground in April on the new Support Services construction project at the site located at 1162 Entley Street near Koncrete Industries. Construction is expected to be completed by March 2011.

The development of a new Support Services facility represents the second phase of a project to relocate the Support Services and the Transportation Department from 325 S. Park Street. This facility will house the warehouse, maintenance, grounds services, print shop, and food services.

### Project Description

- Site acreage: 9.5 acres (for both the new Support Services facility and new Southeast Washington Transportation Cooperative)

- Support Services building size:
  - 21,636 square feet (main floor)
  - 6,904 square feet (mezzanine)

### Project Cost - \$3,233,377

(This includes base bid & alternates and fees)

### See more online:

[http://www.wwps.org/atoz/support\\_services\\_project.htm](http://www.wwps.org/atoz/support_services_project.htm)

### State matching dollars fund project

The district is using the approximately \$4 million state matching money from the Transportation Cooperative construction project to fund the new Support Services facility. State matching dollars do not increase local bond rates for Walla Walla taxpayers.



*District officials and project leaders celebrate the start of the new Support Services facility with a public groundbreaking ceremony.*

## District eliminates three administrative positions as part of 2010 savings plan

Walla Walla Public Schools is reorganizing its administrative team to cut costs in the wake of state funding cuts to public education.

In all, the administrative reorganization plan will eliminate three administrative positions netting a 7.5 percent administrative cut.

Changes as a result of the district's administrative reorganization plan will take effect for the 2010-2011 school year.

### 2010-2011 Administrative Reorganization Plan

#### Eliminate Technology Director position

- Assessment Director **Ron Higgins** is assuming the duties of the Technology Director and will continue with his current assessment duties.



*Ron Higgins*

The current Technology Director will transfer to an open position within the district next school year.

#### Eliminate one Wa-Hi Asst. Principal position

- Walla Walla High School Assistant Principal **Brett Cox** will transfer to Garrison Middle School to replace **Josh Wolcott**. Wolcott is transferring to Edison Elementary to replace **Nancy Withycombe**, who is retiring at the end of the 2009-2010 school year. Cox's position will not be filled at Wa-Hi.



*Brett Cox*

#### Eliminate Plant Facilities Director position

- Facilities Support Director **Dan Johnson** is assuming the responsibilities of the Plant Facilities Director position and will continue his current duties.

Current Plant Facilities Director **Lowell Schneider** is retiring in August at the end of the 2009-2010 budget year.



*Dan Johnson*

*"We are taking the necessary steps to balance our budget with less revenue by keeping the reductions as far from the classroom as possible."*

**Superintendent Rich Carter**

## Community Connections

### May proclaimed Partners in Learning Month

Walla Walla Public Schools has proclaimed May as Partners in Learning Month to raise awareness of the vital role businesses, agencies and individuals have in our school system.

Partners in Learning Month is an opportunity for Walla Walla Public Schools to extend a heartfelt thank you to all our community partners who provide essential support to help Walla Walla Public Schools offer a first-class educational program. Each May, we will organize annual celebrations to recognize the contributions of our district partners.

"Our children and staff are the lucky recipients of a vast array of gifts from our community," School Board President **Cindy Meyer** said. "With the gifts of time, talents, professional services and financial support, these caring and compassionate people make a tremendous difference in our school district."

### Local businesses donate t-shirts to Pioneer

This spring some hard working Pioneer Middle School students received free t-shirts donated by T Walla Walla, Original Design and the Bicycle Barn. The t-shirts say Hard Work Cafe and were given to each student who earned a 3.9 or better. The shirts have a 4.0 embroidered on the sleeve for students who earned a 4.0.

"I think it's great that local merchants are stepping up to celebrate and recognize the importance of academic success and hard work," Principal **Dana Jones** said.

### City presents Arbor Day award to Blue Ridge

Congratulations to the Blue Ridge PTA and former Principal **Connie Taylor-Randall** for receiving a 2010 "City of Trees Arbor Day Award."

The award nomination is in recognition of the tree planting effort organized at Blue Ridge last April. Thirty-seven Blue Ridge students and their families participated by planting 70 new trees at Blue Ridge.

"This was a great turnout and by all reports, a great day for all involved," said **Jim Dumont**, City of Walla Walla Parks and Recreation Director, in a letter to Taylor-Randall. "Your enthusiasm for your students and community is truly contagious and I am sure these students 'caught' an appreciation of trees and their role in the environment."



## Girls Rock the House!



(Photo L-R) Kathryn Southwick Hess, Allison Wujek, Mary Crowley, Elli Rassbach, Brelynn Hess, Ambria Mourning and Donna Wujek.

Six area middle school students participated in the “Girls Rock the House” national initiative to get 8th grade girls engaged in politics. The program offered students a six-week hands-on learning experience about the United States political system.

Parents **Katherine Southwick-Hess** and **Donna Wujek** organized the effort after getting a call from Congresswoman **Cathy McMorris Rodgers** encouraging them to get involved.

Congratulations to Pioneer Middle School 8th grade student **Elli Rassbach** for winning the local Girls Rock the House competition and advancing to represent Walla Walla at the district competition in May. District winners earn a trip to Washington DC. in June as part of the program.

Rassbach’s legislative bill dealt with the problem of obesity in America by addressing changes in how “junk food” is labeled, marketed and taxed.

**Anne-Marie Zell Schwerin**, Executive Director of the Walla Walla YWCA, **Mira Gobel**, Associate Principal at Walla Walla High School and **Jennifer Northam**, Public Relations Coordinator for Downtown Walla Walla Foundation judged the competition. Learn more about Girls Rock the House online at: <http://www.girlsrockthehouse.org/>.

## A decade of energy savings adds up to real dollars

District Energy Manager **John Butenhoff** reported to school board members in March the district saved more than \$300,000 in energy costs in 2008-09. This brings the district’s total savings since the program began 10 years ago to nearly \$3 million dollars.

Butenhoff said he is proud to be part of a program which helps the district save precious district dollars for use in educational programs.

Learn more online at:

[http://www.wwps.org/support/energy\\_management.htm](http://www.wwps.org/support/energy_management.htm)



John Butenhoff

## New online computer program provides instant student data

The district recently launched OASIS: Online Access to Student Information Systems. This program, developed under the leadership of Assessment Director **Ron Higgins**, creates an online data storage site.

OASIS updates student demographic data daily. In addition, OASIS also stores student pictures, lists of special programs by which the student is served, student attendance data, schools attended, teachers, classes taken, and student assessment data.

“Ready online access to student, classroom, school-wide, and district-wide data places pertinent data and information in the hands of those who can use it immediately to make informed instructional decisions,” Higgins said. “With this new tool, users do not need to be ‘experts’ in knowing about every assessment that may be given to a student to make informed instructional decisions.”

The navigation and use of this web-based application is intuitive and displays information in both easy to understand graphs as well as detailed tables of data, according to Higgins. The district worked with Miriam Technologies, Inc. to develop OASIS. Miriam’s president is **Ken Treis**, a graduate of Walla Walla Public Schools. Over the past two years, Treis helped the district create a customized data warehouse which specifically met the unique needs of Walla Walla Public Schools.

“He has an uncanny skill to take complicated and challenging concepts and make them reality in a computer application,” Higgins said. “Finding a way to successfully capture, store, and display student data online has been an area of interest for at least 10 years.”

Higgins said the district will continue to refine the program and offer staff training to best utilize this new tool.

## Walla Walla Public Schools name 2010 Volunteers of the Year

*Special thanks to our Art Regier Award recipients for their dedication and exceptional service*



**Peggy Cox** - Green Park Elementary and Pioneer Middle School

*Nominators - Jean Tobin, Dana Jones, Elissa Stites, Mike Lambert, Michelle Carpenter, and Missy Johnson*

- Past Green Park PTA president
- Longtime Green Park Math Team and 5th grade Novel Groups volunteer
- Key leader of the Pioneer Middle School Math team

Nominator Jean Tobin said: “I know that Peggy’s help is invaluable to many teachers in this district. She volunteers in many ways and the math team is only a small part of what she contributes. I believe that she is a role model for teachers and students alike.”



**Holly Howard** - Lincoln Health Center, Citizens for Schools

*Nominators: Cindy Meyer and Missy Peterson*

- Holly helped make the Lincoln Health Center become a reality for our community.
- Longtime volunteer for the Walla Walla Citizens for Schools committee, Explorer Parents Organization, Swim Team Organization and American Field Service intercultural program.

Nominator Missy Peterson said:

“Since at least 1998, Holly has unselfishly been sharing her time and talents to improve and enrich the lives of students.”



**Dr. Alison Kirby, MD** - Lincoln Health Center

*Nominators: Jim Sporleder and Dan Calzaretta*

- It was Alison’s idea to propose bringing a school-based health center to our community
- The Lincoln Health Center provides vital health services to Lincoln students in support of their education and well being.
- Despite having her own medical practice, she dedicates two days a week to volunteer at the Lincoln Health Center.

Nominator Jim Sporleder said:

“Her determination of care, compassion, and empathy for students has been demonstrated by taking the vision of the health center and making it a reality. Lincoln is the only high school in Eastern Washington that has a health center. Dr. Kirby is truly an inspiration for all of us who have the wonderful opportunity to work with her.”



**Jim & Judi Armstrong** - Blue Ridge Elementary

*Nominators: Paula Nichols, Tina Holbrook and Lucy Gregoire*

- As retired professionals, they commit to read with second grade students one morning every week, bring treats to students on special occasions and adopt a family in need during the holiday season.

Nominator Tina Holbrook said: “Jim and Judi Armstrong have a genuine care and concern for the well being of Blue Ridge. They share our story and their own experiences among various community organizations. They have a deep respect for the hard work and caring nature of our Blue Ridge staff.”



## AVID program helps Walla Walla High School student focus on future

By **Jose Beleche**, *Walla Walla High School Junior*

My name is Jose Beleche and I'm an 11<sup>th</sup> grade AVID student and President of the AVID Club. My goal has always been to go to college. I was in the fifth grade when I first learned about college, and I asked, "Why not? Why not try and make something of myself?"

My mom, my uncles, my whole family always told me that I deserve a better life than theirs. It's true that they are happy living like they are but with a lot of sacrifices - from crossing the border at such young ages, to getting their papers. I already had all of those things. My mom raised me as a single parent, working two jobs. Unfortunately, she also has severe arthritis. She has suffered so much that deep down I know I have to repay her. The only way to do that is to go to college and prepare for an excellent career as an engineer.



### AVID - ADVANCEMENT VIA INDIVIDUAL DETERMINATION

AVID is designed to increase schoolwide learning and performance.

#### AVID Mission

The mission of AVID is to ensure that all students, and most especially students in the middle with academic potential capable of completing a college preparatory path:

- will succeed in rigorous curriculum,
- will enter mainstream activities of the school,
- will increase their enrollment in four-year colleges, and
- will become educated and responsible
- participants and leaders in a democratic society.

*Learn more about AVID at: <http://www.avidonline.org/>*

My freshman year was by far the worst year in my educational career. I was thrown back into my old habits of procrastination, of laziness and my grades reflected that: solid "Cs" and low "Bs."

My intentions were to get through high school like this, taking the minimum number of classes. But something occurred at the end of my freshman year. I found that road on which I would arrive at the college of my dreams. I was interviewed and selected to participate in a class known as AVID.

I would have never imagined that I would be thinking of enrolling into universities such as Washington State University, Gonzaga University or even the University of Washington. But thanks to AVID, these universities are only an application away.

AVID has pushed me to be the best student that I can be. I am now involved in AP and Honors courses which will improve my learning and prepare my mind for the rigorous classes of college. I am also taking the maximum number of classes so that I won't lose my educational pace.

My future goals have not changed, but with the tools and preparation that AVID has given me, the only things that have changed are my options. Not the option of "if" I am going to college but the option of "where." Not the option of "what I want to study," but the option of "how far I want to further my educational career." I know there will be challenges and obstacles, but I have AVID.

Not only is AVID like the safety rope that holds you whenever you fall off a rock while rock climbing, but AVID is also like the bungee cord that springs you back up once you have fallen.

**"My mom raised me as a single parent, working two jobs. Unfortunately, she also has severe arthritis.**

**She has suffered so much that deep down I know I have to repay her. The only way to do that is to go to college and prepare for an excellent career as an engineer."**

I never knew my father. He left when I was two and, as horrible as that sounds, I am somewhat thankful. Because if he hadn't left, I wouldn't have become the wonderful, smart, well-mannered person that I am today.

I didn't have any siblings until I was thirteen and those thirteen years were very lonely. I almost never saw my mom because of her work. My little sister Ruby; who is three, is one of the most important people in my life and although she doesn't know it, she has inspired me to try even harder with my education.

The path to college is hard and elusive. Since I didn't have any older siblings or parents who went to college, I couldn't follow in their footsteps. How was I going to get into college? I knew my destination, but I couldn't find the road.

## New superintendent excited to begin tenure in Walla Walla

Mick Miller was recently named the district's new superintendent. Miller, who is currently the superintendent of the Deer Park School District in Deer Park WA, will assume the duties of his new position July 1, following the retirement of Superintendent Dr. Richard Carter.



Miller has held the superintendent position in Deer Park for the past six years. He began his career as a classroom teacher at North Central High School in Spokane, WA where he taught English and Social Studies for seven years.

He transitioned into administration in 1990 by assuming the duties of assistant principal at North Central High School and then moved to Kelso, WA in 1994 to accept the position of principal at Kelso High School. Miller moved back to Spokane in 1996 to take the principal position at Mead High School. He remained in this position until 2004.

Miller earned his undergraduate degree and superintendent's credential from Washington State University. He received his master's in education with an emphasis in school administration from Whitworth College in Spokane, WA.

"I am both humbled and thrilled to have the opportunity to work in the Walla Walla Public Schools. The District has such a long and rich history of excellence and is filled with so many outstanding educators. It was an honor to be selected."

*Mick Miller*

### Quaresma named new Personnel Director

Sharpstein Elementary Principal **Laure Quaresma** has been selected by new Superintendent **Mick Miller** to be Walla Walla Public Schools' new Executive Director of Personnel. Quaresma replaces **Dr. Bill Jordan** who is retiring at the end of the school year. She will assume her new duties July 1.



Quaresma has 29 years of experience in education. She was a school teacher in Oregon and Washington schools for 17 years. Quaresma served as assistant principal at Garrison Middle School from 1997 to 2001 and has held the principal position at Sharpstein the past nine years.

### Why is Walla Walla a good fit?

Walla Walla is, and always has been, a wonderful place to raise a family. While my wife Shannon and I only have one child remaining at home, we can think of no better place for us. Also, with Shannon having deep family roots (the Haun and Meliah families) in Walla Walla, it is something of a homecoming for us.

### What are your hobbies and interests?

I am an avid reader, especially novels, love to play golf and have an interest in politics.

### Why have you dedicated your life to public education?

In our country, public education helps to perpetuate our democracy and helps fuel the most incredible economy in the history of the world.

Also, every child has the ability to better his or her life and that usually happens through education.

### What is your philosophy on leadership?

All people need to be treated with dignity and respect. Further, we must all work hard at both nurturing and attending to our relationships.

### Tell us about The Miller Family:

My wife of 24 years, Shannon, is a middle school teacher in Spokane Public Schools. Kate, age 22, is a UW graduate working in Seattle; Donny, age 21, is a junior at WSU; and Mary, age 14, will be a high school freshman next year.

## Please join us for the End-of-Year Celebrations

### Garrison Middle School 8th Grade Recognition

Wednesday, June 9: 7 p.m. - Cordiner Hall, Whitman College

### Pioneer Middle School 8th Grade Recognition

Tuesday, June 8: 7 p.m. - Wa-Hi Gym

### Lincoln Alternative High School Graduation

Thursday, June 3: 6 p.m. - WW Fairgrounds

### Walla Walla High School Commencement

Friday, June 4: 7 p.m. - Wa-Hi Commons area (gym if raining)

\* Last day of school - Thursday, June 10 (early dismissal)