

Staff Spotlight

MARILYN MELGOZA

Brilliant, clear blue skies filled the horizon above the lush green grass blanketing the Walla Walla High School soccer field. Class of 2013 AVID Club President Marilyn Melgoza had a big smile on her face as she arrived for the inaugural Staff versus Student charity soccer match she helped start from the ground up. Fast forward seven years and Melgoza, a Class of 2013 graduate, has returned to her beloved former school as the new Wa-Hi ASB Advisor. She also serves in the Equity and Dual Programs Department as a community outreach specialist.

As a junior at Walla Walla High School, she reached out to community leader Lawson Knight to learn how to create a scholarship program by using a Staff/Student soccer match as the vehicle to raise funds. Knight eagerly agreed and proceeded to train the AVID Club students on the process. In a short time, the group was successful in getting it started.

"In our first year, we awarded two students \$250 scholarships to purchase text books and supplies for college," said Melgoza. "It felt good to do something positive for the school and our peers."

Melgoza was also active in the Latino Club and National Honor Society before moving on to Gonzaga University where she earned a degree in Criminal Justice and Sociology. She recently earned her master's degree from Creighton University in School Counseling and Preventative Mental Health.

Melgoza credits Wa-Hi Intervention Specialist Melito Ramirez as her most influential educator for his continuous encouragement and support.

Marilyn is passionate about mentoring student leaders and is inspired to find ways to engage the student body and create an inclusive school culture.

Walla Walla Public Schools



Walla Walla Center for Children & Families

For decades early learning leaders dreamed of a center to house all of Walla Walla's programs for its youngest children. This dream became a reality this fall when the new Walla Walla Center for Children & Families opened its doors to provide a variety of early learning programs for area children under the direction of Samantha Bowen. New this year is Transitional Kindergarten. This is a free early learning program, for four-year-olds, designed to help close the opportunity gap that we see among students entering kindergarten. Head Start and ECEAP are also offered at the new center for preschool-aged students. Additional community agencies and service providers are housed at the center to support families. Visit wwccf.org to learn more about these exciting programs.



HONORING THE HISTORY OF BLUE RIDGE ELEMENTARY

This summer the district developed a beautiful wall display in the main hallway of the former Blue Ridge Elementary to honor the school's four-decade legacy. The "Faces of Blue Ridge," featured on the walls of the school's main entrance, were also captured in the design to preserve this important piece of Walla Walla's history.



STATE EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR!

Congratulations to Melito Ramirez Wa-Hi Intervention Specialist

...for being named the 2020 Washington Classified School Employee of the Year! Melito has dedicated the past four decades working professionally to support students and families in the valley.



A new school option for families

This summer the district created Walla Walla Online to offer families an option for a free, online school for grades kindergarten through 12. Long-time district educator Carina Stillman has been named to direct the program which features high quality online curriculum.



What does WW Online offer?

- ▶ Free, Online Public School
- ▶ Kindergarten through 12
- ▶ High-Quality Online Curriculum
- ▶ Supported by WWPS Teachers
- ▶ District-provided Chromebook
- ▶ Access to WWPS Athletics & Activities

WALLAWALLAONLINE.ORG

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Walla Walla Public Schools

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Walla Walla Public Schools does not discriminate in any programs or activities on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, veteran or military status, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following employees have been designated to handle questions and complaints of alleged discrimination.

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Walla Walla Public Schools is an Equal Opportunity Employer and complies with all requirements of the ADA.

Where are they Now?

Washington's Most Sought-After Graduates

Class of 2008 graduate Dr. Justin Dalke loves his community and wants to give back at every opportunity. His years at Berney Elementary School, Garrison Middle School and Walla Walla High School provided an educational foundation for him to build on.

Today he is an Optometric Physician at Valley Vision Clinic in Walla Walla and was named Young Optometrist of the Year in 2020 for Washington State. Dr. Dalke is active in Walla Walla's Noon Rotary Club where he was named Rookie of the Year in 2016. Examples of giving back to the community include participating in local school vision screenings and health fairs. He also presents at local hospital and health care programs.



Dr. Dalke received his Associates of Arts degree at Walla Walla Community College through the Running Start program. He went on to Walla Walla University where he earned a Bachelor in Science degree and he holds a Doctorate degree from Pacific University. Dr. Dalke enjoys reading nonfiction books and listening to podcasts, exploring new cities and fitness. He credits Mrs. Grace Ogoshi-Maher, his 8th Grade Language Arts teacher, as his most inspirational Walla Walla Public Schools educator. He appreciates her sharp-witted dialogue and says she helped lay the foundation of a lifelong love of reading. Dr. Dalke's wife is an optometrist and clinical director of a local ophthalmology clinic. They have a two-year-old child and another one due this fall. His future goals include partnership in his practice, building a forever home and raising his family in Walla Walla.

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Walla Walla Public Schools Focus on Education

Your School District Newsletter | Fall 2020 | Volume 23 | Issue 1



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Hi-Tech Distance Learning

Lincoln HS teacher utilizes new strategies and modern technology to connect with students

The 2015 release of the documentary 'Paper Tigers' introduced teacher Erik Gordon to the world as he advocates for students with multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Gordon continues to find ways to connect with students and wasn't willing to let the COVID-19 school closures slow him down. He transformed his classroom into a quasi television studio complete with multiple cameras, wireless microphone and camera switcher.

"The switcher lets me change cameras on the fly," said Gordon. "I can go from picture-

Gordon continued inside ■ ■ ■

"I had my students send me selfies so I could print them out and put them on sticks in front of me. It helps it feel more like a classroom."

Erik Gordon, Lincoln HS

Our Vision

"Developing Washington's Most Sought-After Graduates"

Our Mission

Walla Walla Public Schools ensures all students receive high quality instruction in an aligned and coherent system while addressing their social and emotional needs in a safe and engaging environment.

www.wwps.org

“ Superintendent’s Message ”



Walla Walla Public Schools mails the Focus on Education newsletter to the homes of residents three times per year. This publication serves as a platform to keep our community informed and connected to the school district.

We appreciate your involvement and support. The Board of Directors and I value your input and welcome your ideas as we strive to "Develop Washington's Most Sought-After Graduates."

Dr. Wade Smith
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Fall Focus | 2020

Resiliency on all fronts

Seven months ago our school district, community and state were rocked by COVID-19 when Governor Jay Inslee ordered schools closed indefinitely. Since that directive, a cascade of restrictions, protocols and accommodations have been put in place to help mitigate spread of the virus and keep students and staff safe. While schools have developed vast safety response protocols, no one could have foreseen the pandemic's unilateral impact on our daily operations.

We are still learning, adapting and responding to the virus' wake. I could not be more proud of how our staff, students and families have responded. When the virus required us to cancel our traditional graduation exercises, we stepped up to make the events as special as possible for our 400 graduates. When we realized that thousands of students depended on food service, we rose to the challenge to provide over 1,000 meals per day to hungry students. Since June we have served over 170,000 meals! When we realized we would need to start school remotely this fall, we completely overhauled our distance learning experience and developed a brand new Walla Walla Online program to provide another option for families.

I am incredibly pleased how our staff have adjusted to these tremendous challenges, and I am even more proud of how our students and families are responding. No doubt, the impact of campus closures has been extremely difficult. Parents, many who are facing significant financial hardships, have been forced to adjust schedules, arrange for childcare and find creative ways to support their child's education. Students have had to adapt to an online learning model by participating in daily, live sessions while navigating new curriculum and different ways of learning.



(L-R) Principal Ron Higgins and Dr. Smith handing out diplomas at the 2020 Wa-Hi Graduation

Despite these unprecedented obstacles, our families and students are working hard to make the best of this difficult situation. The efforts our students, faculty and families are displaying will ensure our students are prepared and on track when we transition back to in-person learning.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone for coming together during this time of need.

Stay Connected!
» Web: wwpsbond.org
» Twitter: @bondwwps

BOND REPORT

DELIVERING ON OUR PROMISE

THE LATEST BOND NEWS



Local contractors land work

This fall's bid openings for Walla Walla High School and Pioneer Middle School renovations continue to spell good news for many Walla Walla businesses. Local contractor Jackson Contractor Group, Inc. followed-up last year's successful bid to be the general contractor for Walla Walla High School as the low bidder for the Pioneer Middle School renovation project. Additionally, many local subcontractors secured substantial portions of the Wa-Hi improvements slated over the next two years.

"In my 20 years of overseeing many large-scale construction projects for multiple districts, this was the greatest turnout and one of the closest bid-day contests I have experienced," said Superintendent Dr. Wade Smith. "We were so delighted to see such great interest from general contractors and even happier to see the project awarded to another firm with a substantial Walla Walla footprint."

Local companies Houk Masonry, Gillespie Roofing, Cutting Edge Plumbing and Jackson Contractor Group, Inc. were some of the low bidders, bringing tens of millions worth of work home to local contractors and vendors.

Bids for both the Pioneer and Wa-Hi improvements, supervised and reviewed by the district's community-led Bond Oversight Committee, came in on budget and in line with estimates. At Wa-Hi, consistent with the phased approach, work will begin immediately on the old science building, the fine arts addition, fitness addition, and culinary, art and pottery improvements. At Pioneer, renovation of the original 1950's wing and core area will be the first addressed.

For more information, including access to live construction cameras and project renderings, visit the district's bond web page at www.wwpsbond.org.

WA-HI REPORT

What's next for Wa-Hi?

- » Asbestos abatement and renovation of the Cafeteria/Commons and 1964 Science Building
- » Art, pottery, marketing and culinary arts addition on the south-end of the library building
- » New 7,000 sq ft Fitness addition on the west-side of the main gym
- » New 8,000 sq ft Performing Arts addition on the west-side of the auditorium.
- » New roof on the 35-year-old Vocational Building

SEATech Construction students in demand

Jackson Contractor Group is reaching out to SEATech Construction Technology teacher Eric Matson to see if more of his former students are available for hiring following the success of other recent graduates on Jackson's crews.

Jackson Contractor Group has recently hired three SEATech graduates for local and regional work and are looking to hire more carpenters and laborers for the Walla Walla High School and Pioneer Middle School projects and Pasco job sites.

"Of the candidates that I have interviewed, the SEATech students have better interview skills than the rest, hands down," said Project Superintendent Chris Webb. "They also have a good understanding of construction in general and know how to work."

Webb also reports the SEATech students have a tremendous work ethic and are in the company's long-range plans.

"We're hoping to make this a career for them and want them to be part of our family we are building here in Walla Walla," said Webb. "We plan on staying in the community and want them to be a part of our company until they retire."

These projects are prevailing wage government jobs and hourly rates for these positions start at \$32 per hour. Matson is reviewing his list of former students and will stay in communication with Webb regarding potential candidates.

PROJECT OVERVIEW - A CLOSER LOOK

New Science building



Construction Complete!

Virtual walk-through



view on our Website

Project on time and on budget

This fall the new Walla Walla High School Science building was completed. The project was on schedule and on budget.



Wa-Hi infrastructure

Science building video tour

Superintendent Dr. Wade Smith takes viewers on a video tour of the new Walla Walla High School Science Building. Visit the district website to watch.



1.5 miles of trenchwork

Contractors are working on the underground utilities and project infrastructure at Wa-Hi. The numbers are staggering. WATER: Over a mile of water mains. SEWER: Over a half mile of sewer/sanitary lines. TELECOMMUNICATIONS: Over 10 miles of cabling. TOTAL: In all, there is 1.5 miles of trenchwork between the conduit, water, sewer and gas at Wa-Hi.

Pioneer project in full swing

Jackson Contractor Group started the renovation of Pioneer Middle School this fall. The 18-month project will bring the 1950s facility up to today's learning standards.

Energy efficient roof

Contractors replaced the nearly 40-year-old earth and sod covered roof at the former Blue Ridge Elementary building this summer. A new, more energy efficient roof was installed. The district also painted the exterior of the school and improved the landscape.

ERIC HISAW NATIONAL COACH OF THE YEAR

The National Federation of State High School Associations named Walla Walla High School Track Coach Eric Hisaw the Boys' Outdoor Track and Field High School Coach of the Year for the 2018-2019 season.

Hisaw coached the Walla Walla High School Boys' Track and Field team to the 4A state title in May 2019.

Gordon » Cont. from page 1.

in-picture over a PowerPoint, to writing on the whiteboard, to lecturing in front of the class, to having the kids see what I am looking at in my microscope."

Gordon taught himself how to use Open Broadcaster Software which allows him to post entry tasks and objective statements for all his students to see. He also records his sessions for students who are absent or need more review time. Gordon set up a wall of monitors so he could see all the students in the ZOOM session, watch what he is broadcasting and have access to his own browser for email and other classroom duties.

"I had my students send me selfies so I could print them out and put them on sticks in front of me," said Gordon. "It helps it feel more like a classroom."

Gordon said he wanted to give his students a dynamic and engaging experience. Just like during his role in 'Paper Tigers', Erik Gordon continues to show he has a big heart for Lincoln High School students and is always willing to go above and beyond for their success.