

Our City

They're back. And, so starts my 34th year in education. In less than ten months I reach the rule of 90, which means according to the State retirement I could retire. I love what I do and the difference I think I sometimes make in the lives of my students; which is why I am still in the profession of education. I know too that there are parents and patrons who value all of us in the profession who genuinely try to make a positive difference in the lives of our students. When I do retire whether it's next June or ten years from now, it will be after having found someone to replace me who will continue to grow the program that we as a community have built. It will be interesting to see what the next ten months bring, and I am excited to start my 34th year in the classroom.

Last week during our teacher in-service I was introduced to Google Classroom, a program that has been around for a while and that I am just being introduced to indicates I might have been stuck in my ways. It's a program that may change the way I teach, or at least change the way students have access to information and learning tools. I spent most of last week modifying my lessons and loading them into the new classroom. School hadn't started yet but some students already began accessing and reviewing the files; good job Anastasia, Jaden, Brooklynn, Jesus and Jobana. My classes are full this year not only in numbers but in the potential for excellence in achievement. The five I just mentioned show great initiative. I am anxious to see what level of commitment to excellence the other 150 possess.

As school gets started this week so too will regular practices for those who demonstrated a real commitment to excellence by qualifying to compete at the National FFA Convention this October 17 through 22, in Indianapolis, Indiana. Practices for the Novice Parliamentary Procedure team were spotty this summer, as schedules didn't match up. With about 50 days until they compete on the national stage, the rust will be knocked off early as the seven sophomores work to polish their extemporaneous debate and reasoning skills. Today they will begin working to pay for the trip as they start a big cleanup project for Stotz John Deere and Equipment.

I was approached last Tuesday by Jason Behrend, who asked if the FFA members would be willing to cleanup the weeds in the Stotz equipment lot in exchange for a donation to the chapter. I hadn't met Jason before, and I was surprised that he was more or less local having grown up in Aberdeen and was active in that FFA Chapter, with Gary Abercrombie as his advisor. He was as excited to have the FFA members involved with his business as I was at having the opportunity to have a new business partner for the Chapter. After almost 30 years in the community and with the Ag/FFA program, I sometimes lose track of where my former students are and what they are doing. I was pleased to see a number of them working at Stotz when I visited Jason last week. I was further pleased as Jason and I talked about setting up work-release and intern opportunities for students who are truly interested in the service, technology, mechanical and business components of agriculture. Jason has graciously agreed to be a presenter at our Freshmen Soft Skills workshop in October and our high school wide Career Day on February 15 of next year. I am about a month late but, welcome Jason Behrend and Stotz Equipment to American Falls. We are excited about the possibilities you bring.

After my meeting with Jason last Tuesday, Public works Coordinator Jeremy Peirsol, School Superintendent Dr. Ron Bolinger and I met with the Power Count Commissioners to confirm their donation to the tennis court project. I am extremely pleased to report that the Commission voted unanimously to donate \$10,000 toward completion of the project. The School Board and City Council will work out the final details of the maintenance memorandum of understanding in regards to the surfacing of the courts this Monday and Tuesday, and Jeremy will get the American Tennis Association Grant submitted for the \$20,000 which will put us over the top in being able to construct the new courts this fall and next spring. With luck they will be playable by sometime in May, 2017.

With the preparation and base work scheduled to begin on the Willow Bay paving project next week, Daren Dahlke and the Street Department will find themselves extreme busy well into October and possibly November as they also try and get much of the demolition and prep work done on the tennis courts before temperatures drop and snow flies. That being the case, Jeff Nelson, our Building Administrator and member of the Street crew, has found himself extremely busy of late trying to keep up with all the new building permits. Beginning this week Jeff will be spending the hours from 8:00 to noon daily in his Building Administrator role to better accommodate the new construction projects.

Also last Tuesday and Wednesday Jeremy, Daren and Water Superintendent Pete Cortez did walkthroughs with representatives from both Keller and JUB engineering as both companies prepared their proposals for a \$500,000 grant that will hopefully see new water infrastructure south and east of City Park. The existing water lines in the area are all four-inch; six inch is required for proper fire suppression and other service needs. If the grant application is successful it will also allow us to install new storm drains diverting much of the water that ends up causing flooding at Bingham Coop down Roosevelt Street.

The fall is a busy time for all of us. For the farmers it is the culmination of a years worth of effort and struggle. For those of us at the City, we press to get important projects done before snow flies. And, at our schools fall brings the start of new possibilities as kids enter our classrooms with their future fully in front of them. As I set out in the fall of my teaching career, I again am excited about the potential I see in my classes and the students within. I look forward to the possibilities that abound not only in my classroom and its students but in the community that is certainly the best place to live.

Until next week...