

## Our City

It's called "Next Steps." It is the second to the last national event as part of the national Teacher of the Year program and it took place last week in Princeton, New Jersey. I won't go into the details other than to say it like the previous gatherings has been impactful and to some degree life changing for me. Perception is generally about perspective and the often predisposed view or implicit bias one may have about something that is largely unknown to them. My perception of my Teacher of the Year cohort of 2019 prior to meeting and getting to know them I am embarrassed to say could not have been further from reality or the truth. Like the teachers I am privileged enough to work with every day here in American Falls they are down to earth and grounded, have a wealth of knowledge and life experiences I could never dream of possessing. What they have taught me has not only made me a better teacher it has made me a better person and for that I am most truly grateful. Perhaps not surprisingly some of the lessons I think have also made me a more effective mayor.

Two weeks ago on August 25th I was flown to Spokane, Washington and then drove northeast to Timber Lake Junior High School and the Lakeland School District where Stacie Lawler was named the 2020 Idaho Teacher of the Year; she will begin her term next year when mine concludes on January 14, 2020. Unlike me, Stacie is a bundle of joy and energy that radiates through in everything that she does and those she comes into contact with. Don't get me wrong I have plenty of joy and energy; but she appears to be like the Energizer Bunny. While her life experiences are vastly different than mine she is every bit as qualified and very deserving of the honor and title.

As I write this late on a Saturday night in my New Jersey hotel room I find myself behind on my steps; having yet to meet my 10,000 step daily requirement for the Blue Cross Foundation's Mayors Walking Challenge that has taken place annually for the last several years during the month of Walktober. I find myself in the middle of a crowded pack with most mayors averaging about 12,000 steps a day. Those mayors with the schedule that allows them to walk daily with elementary students earn 5,000 bonus steps each day they do it. Unfortunately, my schedule does not permit that to happen, but that's okay, I love the walking. If successful in meeting the threshold of 10,000 daily steps the money donated to the City by the Blue Cross Foundation will be used to further improve recreation and walkability in our community.

In my absence to Princeton Superintendent Chris Fehringer and Councilwoman Kristen Jensen attended a walkable communities and community health workshop in Twin Falls last Thursday and Friday. These workshops, like the Mayors Walking Challenge, were also sponsored by the Blue Cross Foundation. I have appreciated the assistance of Fehringer and Jensen in this effort as we continue our efforts to make this a community where access to recreation and other activities improves our local health and wellness.

In a similar effort Fehringer and Street Superintendent Dalhke are working to improve ADA accessibility on Fort Hall and Lincoln through another grant application. If successful this grant application would provide for the construction of multiple ADA ramps along these streets in 2020. Fehringer and Dahlke are also working to secure funding for 2021 that will allow for the completion of the sidewalk along Bannock from Harrison Street to Lee Street Park finally completing this safe route to William Thomas Middle School.

While the week that was for me focused on my “Next Steps” as the Idaho Teacher of the Year for 2019 I look forward to getting home and being able to take real steps with those willing to walk with me as we continue to make our community the very best place to live.

Until next week...