

## Today's students; tomorrow's entrepreneurs

School innovation takes many impressive forms in northeastern Washington. NEWESD 101's ongoing effort to showcase the region's innovative programs continues in this edition with profiles on two programs serving students in Spokane County – Riverpoint Academy and Spokane Valley Tech.

### Riverpoint Academy:

*“Failure is not an option.”* – Actor Ed Harris, portraying NASA flight director Gene Kranz, in the acclaimed 1995 film Apollo 13.

Students in the Mead School District's Riverpoint Academy were not yet born when Harris uttered one of the most famous movie quotes of all time.



*They look the same, but why don't they sound the same? Research by Riverpoint senior Sailah Sweeney provided the answer – varnish.*

Most, however, are very familiar with the line, though they will quickly add that they don't necessarily agree with it. That's because their world of hands-on learning encourages exploration and risk taking. Counterintuitive as it may sound, successful students, like successful entrepreneurs and inventors, say failure is a necessary and predictable byproduct of invention.

More than predictable, failure also can be highly beneficial, most say, if one reacts to it in a positive way – learning from it, ruling out some approaches, being open to others and ultimately finding solutions.

Positive outlooks are found everywhere at Riverpoint, a project-based, entrepreneurial high school serving 110 high school juniors and seniors. The school, now in its fourth year, provides students a challenging curriculum built around bio-mechanics (biology, chemistry and physics), inventioneering (computer science and humanities) and TrepStudio (entrepreneurship, design and humanities).

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### Spokane Valley Tech:

*“All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them.”* – Walt Disney.

Sprague, Appleway and University – three of Spokane Valley's most important arterials intersect outside the doors of Spokane Valley Tech (SVT). For commerce and travel, it is one of the busiest and most important intersections in greater Spokane.

It seems a fitting location for SVT. Just like the converging streets outside, SVT has become an intersect point for educational innovation and imagination.

Now in its third year, the school serves 145 students in a consortium including the Central Valley, East Valley, Freeman and West Valley school districts (with priority enrollment given to students in those districts).

SVT actually is an umbrella for three separate, but related programs – a skills center initiative for high school juniors and seniors, an academy program offering core high school subjects and a STEM academy integrating language arts and social studies in a STEM-focused learning environment.

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*Quality control: SVT senior Kevin Rathmanner, left, learns the finer points of metal fabrication from advanced manufacturing instructor Mark Bitz.*

## WWMAS?

Some years ago, for a time, bracelets with the initials WWJD found some popularity. If I could design a meaningful bracelet to wear today, mine would have the initials WWMAS...*what would Maya Angelou say?*

With the 2016 presidential campaign in fairly full swing, and with the convening of Washington state's legislative session this month, contention – and sometimes disagreement bordering on nastiness – too often prevails.

In a society in which we legitimately have differing points of view on any number of issues, the way in which such disagreement is expressed, and the impact of such expression, is concerning.

Which makes me think of Ms. Angelou, an American author, poet and civil rights advocate who famously wrote and said *many* memorable things filled with sage advice, but for me none more powerful than this:

*I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.*

This quote is in a frame hanging on the wall of my office, a gift from the women and men who served as school counselors in the Cheney Public Schools. As counselors, as professionals, these fine people knew well that how people are treated makes the biggest difference in how they feel about you; and, importantly, about themselves.

I think about the people in my personal and professional life who have made me feel positive even though our viewpoints may have differed, and about those who have left a decidedly different impression. I am ever grateful for and appreciative of those who understand the deep wisdom of Maya Angelou's quote; who revere the

primacy of the age-old *Golden Rule* ... treat others as you would want (and hope) to be treated.

Ms. Angelou fundamentally understood that people have differences, yet that no person is at such a station in life that they can respectfully treat others as "less than." She knew that it is always better to talk *directly to and with* people, rather than go to others to talk or complain *about them*.

She was fully aware of the inherent respect and dignity that all people are owed, and that even the quietest voices deserve to be heard.

Whatever position in the education constellation any of us may hold, and despite the differing perspectives we may have about big or smaller issues, each of us should embrace our own important role, and respect the role(s) of others. Our students will derive maximum benefit only when we *each* model respect, civility and a commitment to working through complex issues and contention in productive and respectful ways.

Think about your own teachers, those from your days in a classroom as a student yourself and those who are your teachers and examples in life ... you may not recall exactly what they said or did, say or do, but you undoubtedly are impacted by *how* they say and do it, and by *how* it makes you feel.

As we move forward through a legislative session, through the second half of the school year, indeed through a seemingly endless election season, my fervent hope is that we will do so with a respectful consideration of *what would Maya Angelou say* about the words and actions we choose.



Michael Dunn, Superintendent

## Principal summit establishes vision

Earlier this fall, when 27 educators gathered in Snoqualmie for a principal summit, they began laying the foundation for important work that will eventually touch the entire state. The summit, sponsored by the Association of Washington Schools Principals, was called to consider the complex challenges facing today's schools and, even more importantly, the best responses.

The principals discussed school climate and culture, equity, structural challenges, the achievement gap, leadership skills, funding and

other topics. They also discussed the traits, attitudes and habits of an effective principal, including the ability to listen, cope with adversity and form professional learning communities with other principals.

A full report on the summit, offering recommendations and best practices, will be published in the weeks ahead. For more information on principal leadership and the summit, please contact Robyn Davis at (509) 991-9255 or [rdavis@esd101.net](mailto:rdavis@esd101.net).

Focus is published during the academic year by the Superintendent of NorthEast Washington Educational Service District 101. Focus is published to provide current information about NEWESD 101-sponsored and co-sponsored programs and issues of educational significance to staff in the 59 public school districts and 45 state-approved private schools receiving administrative and instructional support services from NEWESD 101.

Comments, questions or suggestions should be sent to the editor, NEWESD 101, 4202 S. Regal St., Spokane, WA 99223, (509) 789-3540.

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# Dan and Karen Hornfelt: Always a cut above

Tell Dan Hornfelt he seems a little chippy, is working against the grain, or remind him he is out on a limb. He will not be offended. More likely, he will agree – and thank you for noticing.

Outside of work, this polished, highly experienced school administrator is a woodsman at heart. Catch him on a weekend and there is a good chance you will find him covered in tiny wood chips. Hornfelt, executive director of support services for Pullman Public Schools, also is an artist. His canvas is wood.

With his wife Karen – a long-time executive secretary for the district, now working for Washington State University – the pair have found an avocation that returns them to their childhood roots, while simultaneously reflecting their love and respect for animals.

Like Michelangelo, who could see art hidden in stone, the Hornfelts see art hidden in wood. The tools of their trade are chainsaws and wood-burning tools.

He carves animal images from large blocks of cedar, red fir and white pine. She etches refined images on smaller blocks of tamarack, birch, maple and elm. Their products are very different, but equally unique and equally inspired by their early years, growing up on the eastern slopes of the Cascades.

Both were raised in the Wenatchee area and spent considerable time outdoors. Their love of the wilderness and animals never left them. Today, living in Pullman, they find themselves in a perfect location for mountain recreation in three states.



*Love of animals inspires the artistic work of Dan and Karen Hornfelt.*



They honor wildlife through their art. Dan's work includes chainsaw images of bears, beavers, cougars and even fun-loving images of giant sasquatch. Karen's precise living room pieces include depictions of bears, buffalo, deer, elk, moose and salmon.

Candle holders, salt and pepper shakers and a tic-"track"-toe board also are in the family repertoire.

While mostly done for fun, they have sold a few pieces and – someday in retirement – may expand the business side if it does not infringe too much on their wilderness recreation. Chippy jokes notwithstanding, they just enjoy their art.

Sometimes, great beauty can be found in working against the grain.

To see a gallery of the Hornfelts' work, visit <http://khornfelt.wix.com/nsws>.



Middle school and high school teams are invited to participate in the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Lakeside Robotics Rumble, February 27 at Lakeside High School in Nine Mile Falls.

The event is free and open to any school interested in competing with the ST Educational Robot (distributed by LHS) or Boe Bot. For more information or registration, contact Brent Osborn (509) 340-4203 or [bosborn@9mile.org](mailto:bosborn@9mile.org).



The electronic tools available to local educators have never been greater. Since the start of the 2015-16 school year, educators have enjoyed access to My School Data, a product developed by the Washington School Information Processing Cooperative (WSIPC).

My School Data provides dashboards, allowing teachers, counselors, principals and other curriculum staff to quickly access data not easily obtained or reported directly from their Skyward Student Management System.

Content includes information on attendance, discipline and offense, assessment scores, grades and enrollment data. Information can be analyzed at the individual, class, grade, school and district level.

My School Data dashboards also include an Early Warning System identifying students at risk of dropping out of school. An additional High School and Beyond feature combines student profile information with course and grade data to deliver an interactive four-year plan toward graduation.

My School Data is a mobile-friendly application and works with Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox or Safari for Apple devices. For more information on My School Data or other WSPIC products, please contact Tim Colliver at (509) 789-3584 or [tcolliver@esd101.net](mailto:tcolliver@esd101.net).

### Riverpoint Academy...

Riverpoint is roughly patterned after San Diego's High Tech High (HTH), widely considered one of the nation's most successful and innovative schools – renowned for its rigor and personalized instruction.

Like HTH, Riverpoint provides real-world connections leading to college and careers.

More than a pure STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) environment, Riverpoint fully integrates all content areas, with high priority placed on communication.

No one is permitted to hide behind his/her research. Every project concludes with a live presentation (to classmates, teachers, parents and business leaders) explaining the task, challenge and findings. After a short time in the school, even the most shy of students become comfortable public speakers.

Those skills were on display in early December when students presented a diverse array of projects ranging from the way the body breaks down and rebuilds muscle during and after exercise, to creation of a solar stove, to construction of a Rubens Tube (visualizing sound), to a scientific comparison of the way varnish affects the tone of a violin.

It's high-level, real-world research that puts students in good stead for the future – learning teamwork, analysis, budgeting, construction, marketing and, last but not least, resilience – which bring us back to the question of failure.

“Across our society, people are afraid to fail and sometimes fall apart when things don't go well,” says Riverpoint Principal Moleena Harris. “That's not the case with our students. The message we hear over and over from our graduates is that Riverpoint provided them the confidence to persevere when adversity strikes.”

Yes, attitude matters. Everyone hits bumps; only the most successful bounce back.

While the school is still evolving, the early returns are highly encouraging. In its first two graduating classes, Riverpoint saw 83 percent of its seniors matriculate to college – a rate already rivaling its model (High Tech High, 86 percent).

With no disrespect meant to Gene Kranz, “Failure is not an option” will not be emblazoned on the walls at Riverpoint.

A better choice might be this timeless, inspirational gem attributed to Benjamin Franklin, “The man who does things makes many mistakes, but he never makes the biggest mistake of all – doing nothing.”

He was right – no mistake about it.

#### ***It's Brent:***

The print edition of NEWESD 101's Fall 2015 *Focus* newsletter incorrectly identified the principal of Lakeside High School. The principal is Brent Osborn. Our apologies for any confusion.

### Spokane Valley Tech...

The STEM academy, which opened this year to freshmen, will expand to a four-year program with the addition of new classes each of the next three years.

For students in all three tracks, SVT allows students to jump-start their college and work careers through deep dives into a host of specialized areas.

They include advanced bio-medicine, advanced manufacturing, engineering, sports medicine, entrepreneurship, environmental engineering, fire science, emergency medical technician, alternative energy and advanced computer science.

SVT also offers weekly programs for younger students, both on-site and at local elementary schools.

Connections to the workplace, always at the fore, are cultivated through partnerships with 225 local businesses offering support through adult mentors and/or formal internships.

KeyTronicEMS, a long-time Spokane Valley electronic manufacturing company, is one of SVT's most valuable partners, offering students 90-hour internships that can be stretched over a year. The experience simulates the actual workplace, with students assigned their own work stations, just like the professional staff.

Director Scott Oakshott says SVT offers a rich environment for students seeking small classes, in-depth study (classes are taught in two-hour blocks) and knowledge directly related to college entrance and/or job placement.

What kind of training and certification is required for physician assistants, emergency medical technicians (EMTs) or builders of Boeing airliners? And what do the jobs pay?

SVT students have done the research; they can quote the educational requirements, job placement numbers and salary figures.

By the time they leave SVT, seniors Levi Meinzinger and Kolby Thomas will have earned their EMT certification. Both see that credential fast-tracking their careers in health care.

Savannah Criddle sees herself eventually owning a business. As a high school junior, she can already write the business plan.

In the advanced manufacturing and technology classrooms, students use computer software to design, visualize, simulate and construct products.

On a recent winter morning, senior Tristan Cox and junior Riley Langston were constructing a robot for an upcoming competition. Just like the workplace, teamwork is considered an essential element of success.

While traffic passes through the important intersection outside SVT, the intersection of school and the workplace thrives inside the walls. In 2015, SVT was named a STEM Lighthouse school – one of only six in the state – for exemplary instruction in science, technology, engineering and math.

At SVT, school and career dreams are coming true. There is no “if” about these students' courage to pursue them.