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CDE Shines Spotlight on D49 Teacher of the Year Finalists

By David Nancarrow
and Aaron Villescascas

D49 Communications

For consecutive years, the Colorado Department of Education shows a District 49 teacher on its list of finalists for the CDE's annual Teacher of the Year Award. In 2019 there was not one D49 teacher on the list. There were two.

Two teachers from the Sand Creek Zone, Horizon Middle School's William Yerger, and Sand Creek High's Erika Siemieniec were two of the state's seven Teacher of the Year finalists named in the fall of 2019. Although Yerger and Siemieniec ultimately did not earn the top prize, the CDE recognized both for their accomplishments during a visit to D49 in November.

"There are 54,000 teachers in the state of Colorado," said CDE representative Patty Gleason to one of Siemieniec's SCHS classes. "[Siemieniec] is one of the top seven, just to give you an idea of what caliber of teacher you have in your classroom."

Siemieniec is a business teacher and advisor to a competitively successful Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) organization. She was recognized for incorporating the community into her classroom through professional interviews, visiting local entrepreneurship pitch events, as well as hosting an advisory board of teachers, students, parents and community members.

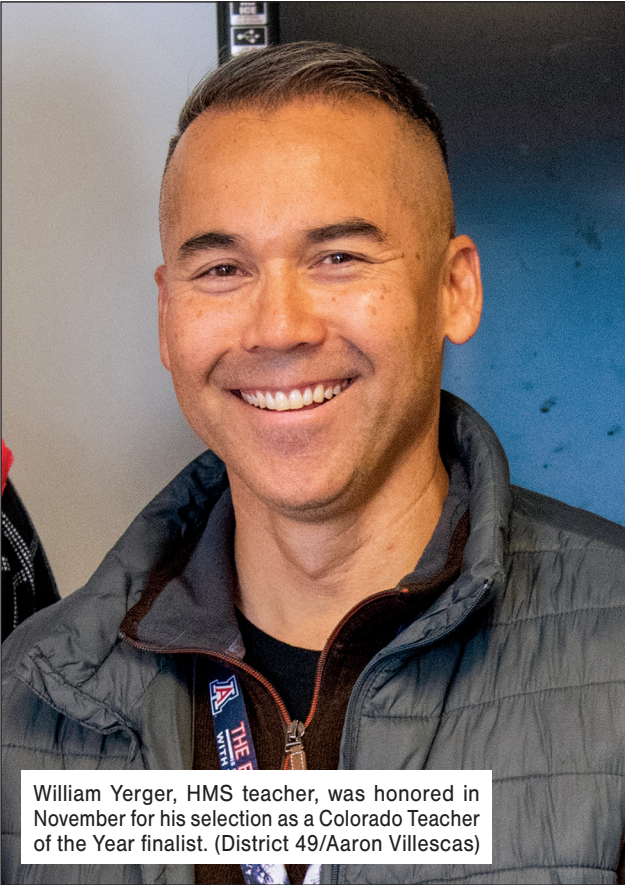
"I'm glad that I get to share my knowledge with you guys," Siemieniec told her class. "And hopefully you listen to something," she added with a grin.

Yerger teaches seventh-grade forensics and eighth-grade health science specializing in using project-based learning to help students make practical, real-world, connections through their schoolwork. He also holds a license as a registered nurse in Colorado, Career Technical Education certification in health science and is an instructor for the American Heart Association.

Gleason shared with Yerger's HMS class part of his nomination in which a colleague wrote "William creates a learning



Erika Siemieniec, SCHS teacher, was honored in November for her selection as a Colorado Teacher of the Year finalist. (District 49/Aaron Villescascas)



William Yerger, HMS teacher, was honored in November for his selection as a Colorado Teacher of the Year finalist. (District 49/Aaron Villescascas)

environment where students feel comfortable and safe to take risks. He's always looking to be better and improve his craft."

As Teacher of the Year finalists, Yerger and Siemieniec received a commemorative plaque along with a runner-up prize of \$1,200. In addition, Blue Bell Creameries also provided ice cream to all students at both HMS and SCHS.

More than 2,000 educators in Colorado applied for the

Teacher of the Year program beginning the nearly year-long process in early 2019. Among the seven finalists, the CDE recognized innovative instruction, and overall impact on students and student achievement.

"I heard one [of my students] already say today 'I'm going to be an accountant now,'" Siemieniec smiled. "So I think I'm doing something right!"

State School Board Association Honors D49 Board of Education



By David Nancarrow
Director of Communications

In recognition of their outstanding record of stable, courageous leadership, the Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB) named D49's five-member Board of Education the sole Board of Distinction among those nominated for CASB's All State Board recognition for 2019. The Colorado All State Board Award recognizes school boards across the state for overall excellence in governance.

The Fremont RE-1 (Canon City) BOE was honored as all-state board of the year, although CASB reports that program judges had a very difficult decision to make based on the strength of D49's nomination. In a congratulatory letter to the BOE (ahead of the 2019 election), CASB representative Randy Black said, "the judges all thought your gov-

erning effort was excellent, courageous, and a model of superior board leadership."

The judges looked closely at the D49 leadership group's performance giving the BOE high marks in sustaining effective governance through the development of a shared vision, engaging constituents, transforming learning systems, promoting strong ethics, and sharpening the board's work.

D49 Chief Education Officer Peter Hilts reported the achievement during the November 7 regular meeting and hinted that our D49 board will remain a strong candidate for All State recognition when judges reconvene in 2020. He continued, "Please join me in recognizing and thanking our board for their leadership in our community and the role model of selfless service they provide for us all."

The Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB) named the D49 Board Of Education the 2019 CASB Board of Distinction (prior to Nov. '19 elections). (District49/Sam Dosen-Himelrick)



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Groundbreaking Celebrates Expansion and Collaboration at SSAE

The team breaks out shovels and hard hats for the groundbreaking ceremony at SSAE December 12, 2019. (Left to right in hard hats) Dave Knoche, iConnect Zone Executive Principal; John Graham, BOE President; Rochelle Kolhouse, Principal, Pikes Peak Early College; Peter Hiltz, D49 Chief Education Officer; Brett Ridgway, D49 Chief Business Officer; Andy Franko, iConnect Zone Leader; Katie Boal, Falcon Homeschool Academic Program Director. (District 49/Aaron Villescass)



By David Nancarrow

Director of Communications

A new look for the Springs Studio of Academic Excellence campus for school year '20-'21 is taking shape right now. School and iConnect Zone leadership, along with some special guests, took advantage of a mild December afternoon for a groundbreaking ceremony.

The event recognized the initial phase of work which will provide additional space for students attending Springs Studio, Pikes Peak Early College, and the Falcon Homeschool Academic Program.

“The saying goes: We are better off together than we are apart,” said SSAE Executive Principal Dave Knoche. “We believe that saying will illustrate the potential of this campus expansion and program unification as we grow into the future.”

The 21,000 sq. ft. expansion to the SSAE grounds will enhance an emerging coding academy, provide modern science labs for the Homeschool Academic Program students, and increase access to concurrent enrollment college courses on one campus.

“Our goal for this campus can be summarized in one word,” Knoche said. “That word is opportunity.”

Guest Speaker Brings Science and Star Power to FHS



Dr. Grandin answers student questions during her visit to Falcon High School, Dec. 13. (District 49/Amy Bremser)

By Amy Bremser

Media Broadcast Specialist

World-renowned animal science expert Dr. Temple Grandin presented information on stock handling, small farm operations and herd behavior to students enrolled in FFA (Future Farmers of America) and the 4-H youth organization at FHS, Dec. 13.

Students from Calhan, Elbert, Limon, Miami-Yoder and those enrolled in Falcon High School's Agriculture Program were in attendance.

“We are honored to have Dr. Grandin come here to speak with students,” said teacher Dave Kranz. “She brings a wealth of knowledge in

the humane treatment of animals.”

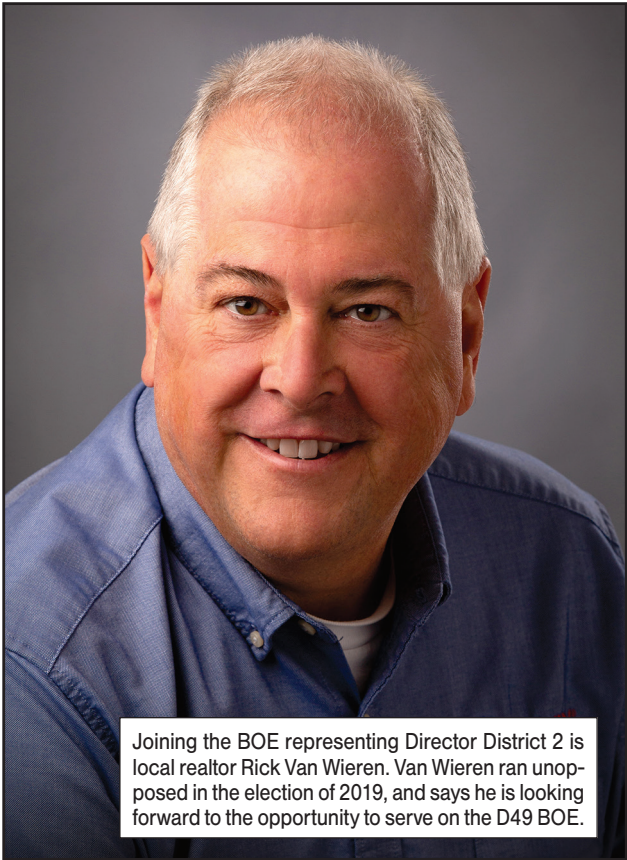
Dr. Grandin is a designer of livestock handling facilities and a professor of animal science at Colorado State University. She has designed facilities in the United States, Canada, Europe, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, and other countries. She is also the author of several books and her life story was also made into an Emmy and Golden Globe award-winning movie.

When asked why she enjoys speaking to young students about animal care Grandin replied, “I’m 72 years old, I have to get the young kids excited, I think one of the most important things I can do is to inform and motivate them.”

D49 welcomes new BOE director and president



BOE Board President John Graham (right) takes oath to serve as president during a swearing-in ceremony in the D49 Board Room Dec. 2. (District 49/Amy Bremser)



Joining the BOE representing Director District 2 is local realtor Rick Van Wieren. Van Wieren ran unopposed in the election of 2019, and says he is looking forward to the opportunity to serve on the D49 BOE.

By David Nancarrow
Director of Communications

At the conclusion of the 2019 election season, D49 welcomes back familiar faces to the Board of Education and greeted a new member at the beginning of December.

Returning members include Kevin Butcher, Dave Cruson and John Graham. Graham appeared on the November ballot, but successfully maintained a position on the board for a second four-year term representing D49's Director District 3.

During the swearing-in ceremony

December 2, Graham, former BOE Vice President was nominated and unanimously elected board President. Butcher was elected as the new board Vice President, and Cruson the new board Treasurer.

"I am excited and looking forward to a second term on the Board of Education and being part of the team that will lead D49 into the future," Graham said. "I know our wonderful teachers and staff will continue to prepare our students to be ready for adult life and leaders in their chosen endeavors."

Joining the BOE representing Director

District 2 is local realtor Rick Van Wieren. Van Wieren ran unopposed in the election of 2019, and says he is looking forward to the opportunity to serve on the D49 BOE.

"This is a terrific board to be a part of. I'm so grateful and excited about working with this team," Van Wieren shared, giving credit to the board for establishing its current working environment. "[There is] thoughtful, respectful processing of real issues. I love that, and I want to be a part of that as a team."

Van Wieren is a father of five and married to a career educator. The western Michigan

native moved to Colorado in 1991 and has a business/political science degree from Hope College in Holland, Michigan. In his inaugural term with the BOE, Van Wieren will serve as the new board secretary.

The board said goodbye to former President Marie La Vere-Wright who reached her term-limit in 2019. Director Joshua Fry also departed the BOE to explore other professional opportunities. With Dr. Fry's departure, his former director's position is now open, and the district is actively seeking an appointee for the vacancy.

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D49 Thankful for Shining Stars Across District

By Amy Matisek
Internal Communications Manager

The week before Thanksgiving set the stage as the perfect time for the District 49 family to express gratitude for the inaugural group of Support and Service Stars. The distinguished honorees were celebrated during Fantastic 49 festivities before the regular monthly board of education work session Nov. 20.

“I am lucky enough to know many of the Support Stars selected this year and can attest to the hard work they put in, and how loving what they do shows through in their actions daily,” shared Cheryl Allen, registrar at Falcon High School and one of the Support

Star honorees.

The Support and Service Stars program was created this school year as a result of staff feedback to recognize staff members who work in support or service roles for their caring attitude and committed work ethic.

“One of our major insights from the voice of the workforce has been how deeply we value and depend on our service and support colleagues,” commented Peter Hilts, chief education officer. “I am proud to say we listened and learned from our workforce, and the star recognition system is an excellent example of personal and organizational learning that is making District 49 the best choice to learn, work and lead.”

Congratulations to the following District 49 Support and Service Stars:

2019 Support Stars

Annette Romero,
professional learning specialist, learning services department

Barb Coffey,
nutrition services manager, Falcon Elementary School of Technology

Belinda Reid,
administrative assistant, Evans International Elementary School

Bill Pierce,
building manager, Springs Studio for Academic Excellence

Brent Buena,
education technology technician, education tech team

Brittany Jilek,
POWER Zone administrative assistant

Cheri Bagby,
paraprofessional, Ridgeview Elementary School

Cheryl Allen,
registrar, Falcon High School

David Barcus,
accounts receivable specialist, finance department

Deb Hall,
administrative assistant, culture and services department

Eric Stelter,
bus driver, transportation department

Hassie Daron,
administrative secretary, Horizon Middle School

Janet Notsch,
paraprofessional, Falcon Middle School

Jordana Gonzales,
paraprofessional, Bennett Ranch Elementary School

Julie Johnson,
library paraprofessional, Skyview Middle School

Karla Palacios,
CLDE technician, individualized education

Kathleen Schneider,
nutrition services manager, Vista Ridge High School

Keith Boyce,
building manager, Woodmen Hills Elementary

Mariah Dunson,
administrative secretary and health room paraprofessional, Patriot High School

Paula Fox,
counseling secretary, Sand Creek High School

Sandi Esparsen,
administrative secretary, ALLIES

Sandi Heckel,
paraprofessional, Falcon Homeschool Program

Sheila Sheets,
paraprofessional, Remington Elementary School

Siouxie Przytulski,
paraprofessional, Odyssey Elementary School

Stephanie Foley,
paraprofessional, Stetson Elementary School

Tammy Phipps,
health assistant, Meridian Ranch Elementary School

Toni Livecchi,
maintenance coordinator, facilities department

Tracey Sousa,
administrative secretary, Vista Ridge High School.

Wendi Sidney,
administrative assistant, learning services department

2019 Service Stars

Andrea Wurmstein,
school counselor, Patriot High School

Beth Cruz,
districtwide school psychologist

Heather Salas,
districtwide co-lead speech language pathologist

Jamie Mendell,
districtwide co-lead speech language pathologist

Jennifer Williams,
school counselor, Skyview Middle School

Kira Collins,
districtwide audiologist



Keith Boyce, building manager at Woodmen Hills Elementary School, receives accolades as a 2019 Support Star during the Fantastic 49 celebration Nov. 20. (District 49/David Nancarrow)



Kira Collins, districtwide audiologist, is honored as a 2019 Service Star by D49 leaders and the board of education Nov. 20 during the Fantastic 49 presentation. (District 49/David Nancarrow)

Kelby Dias,
paraprofessional, PEAK Education Center

Kevin Roche,
building manager, Pikes Peak Early College

Korrin Klimek,
paraprofessional, Springs Ranch Elementary School

Lisa Cheney,
leave specialist, human resources department

Lisa Hartman,
school counselor, Evans International Elementary School

Mary Salazar,
early childhood teacher, Meridian Ranch Elementary School

Nelda Dettwiler,
school nurse at Falcon Middle, Bennett Ranch Elementary and PEAK Education Center

Rebekah Lusk,
school counselor, Bennett Ranch Elementary School

Sandi Gizzi,
districtwide occupational therapist

Community Partnerships Expand D49 Learning Opportunities for Careers in Construction

By David Nancarrow
Director of Communications

Before the sound of power tools and home construction could fill a new workshop on D49’s Falcon Legacy Campus, students, school leaders and community partners gathered to set the stage for an exciting opportunity for D49 learners.

Patriot High School Construction Teacher Jim Baumann spoke to the crowd of guests and students at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the aforementioned D49 Trades Building Oct. 10. “This is for all you guys,” he told the students in the audience. “It’s for you guys!”

The new workspace will provide growth potential for any D49 student considering a career in construction after graduation. Practical application of associated classroom work will qualify those who complete their certification through the program to immediately join the workforce if they wish, and embark on a lucrative post-secondary journey.

Expanding these opportunities at D49 took close collaboration with key community partners in the Falcon Community Builders for Classrooms and the Housing and

Building Association of Colorado Springs.

A half-million dollar grant from the FCBC funded the completion of the new addition on the FLC, and D49’s Career and Technical Education construction pathway aligns with the HBA supported Careers in Construction program.

“Today Careers in Construction has about 1,000 kids going to construction programs in classrooms every day,” explained George Hess, president of the HBA. The program fosters an interest in the trades professions while also connecting students with businesses looking for skilled workers. “We appreciate that,” Hess continued, “And appreciate the success you are all having.”

D49 Chief Business Officer Brett Ridgway recognized the support the district receives from the FCBC, which, in the span of its partnership with D49 has contributed more than \$7 million to the capital needs of the district.

“This has been, and is still, a one of a kind relationship between a Colorado School District and the developers and homebuilders in the community that serve that district,” Ridgway explained. “It has been on a completely voluntary basis: they’ve not had any



PHS Principal Steve Gard (standing) speaks to the audience during a ribbon cutting ceremony for the D49 Trades Building Oct. 10. (District 49/Aaron Villescas)

requirements legal, or otherwise to do so. They are great members of our community.”

Students will master a variety of tasks in the 4,800 sq ft. trades building. Baumann will oversee classroom work such as installing home wiring and drywall as well as other larger-scale student supported projects with a connection to a career in construction. Hess also issued a challenge to students to build a home on site within two years.

“Thank you to everybody who made this possible,” Baumann added. “We’ll use it to the best of our ability. We have a lot of big plans for it.”

D49 Draws National Audience for Annual Rocky Mountain Restorative Practices Conference

By Samantha Dosen
Digital Communications Manager

District 49’s DoDEA grant-funded program, BRIGHT, hosted its annual Rocky Mountain Restorative Practices Conference, November 7-8, 2019 at the Great Wolf Lodge in Colorado Springs.

BRIGHT, Building Restorative Interventions Growing Honorable Traditions, is a training program designed to support student social and emotional well-being, by implementing a school-wide behavior program that emphasizes using restorative practices rather than punitive consequences.

District 49 Director of Communications, David Nancarrow, kicked off the conference with a warm welcome to keynote speaker, Robert Burrs, JD. Dr. Burrs is currently the Drug Court Manager for the 7th Judicial Circuit Courts of Florida. In his civic service, Burrs is a member of the Florida Restorative Justice Association and believes those in our criminal justice system are not all “bad people,” but good people who’ve made a bad decision.

“You are the bridge builders of where we want to go,” said



Robert Burrs, JD, keynote speaker for RMRPC Nov. 7. “You are empowering people by putting the control to the powerless, creating accountability by building relationships and collective collaboration,” explained Burrs. (District 49/Samantha Dosen)

Burrs. “Restorative practices is doing things with students and not doing things to them. It lets students be a part of the process by being active participants.”

Burrs used personal life experience examples in how to be proactive in giving students, including offenders and

victims, a voice to help empower them.

“You are empowering people by putting the control to the powerless, creating accountability by building relationships and collective collaboration,” explained Burrs.

The conference had two-day options for multiple breakout sessions for participants to learn about restorative circles, victim and perpetrator confrontations, hosting restorative conversations and panel discussions that included professionals from different industries.

Sessions provided education and support on handling social and emotional issues that can arise in any industry. The experience and knowledge given to participants will help with conflict resolution.

“This year’s conference was so rejuvenating,” said Lea Holland, BRIGHT project manager. “Attendees were able to network and expand on their learning through team building.”

“What teachers, police officers, counselors, and other service jobs deal with on a day to day basis is emotionally draining and having this time together to learn best practices, and lift one another up, was incredible to see,” said Holland.

18 Years of Giving: District 49’s Santa’s Toy Express Delivers Holiday Cheer to Students



D49 Student shares his Christmas wishes with Santa at the 2019 Santa’s Toy Express. (District 49/Amy Bremser)

By Amy Bremser
Media Broadcast Specialist

Santa’s Toy Express was founded in 2001 in the D49 Transportation Department to help children and their families in School District 49 with special circumstances, celebrate the holidays.

This year’s event took place on Saturday, December 7.

Event director and transportation employee RJ Berry, along with his wife and fellow D49 employee Marysu, organize the annual event, relying on countless volunteer hours of fellow transportation employees and community volunteers.

Students were transported by bus to the D49 transportation building where they were treated to a breakfast cooked by transportation employees and served by Falcon High School JROTC cadets.

Students were then paired with community volunteers including personnel from Schriever Air Force Base. The Falcon area Walmart generously donated \$50 gift cards for each student to shop for family members. Following the shopping trip,

students and volunteers wrapped and packaged gifts for delivery to their families.

Students also enjoyed a magic show, face painting and ornament crafts provided by students from the district’s Springs Studio for Academic Excellence, and were able to meet with Santa and Mrs. Claus.

Walmart, Aspen Auto, Farmers State Bank, and McCandless Trucking also contributed financially this year. Other groups like the Knit Wits (a local knitting group) made knit hats and scarves for students. Dollar Tree provided stocking stuffers and the Falcon Fire Department assisted by bringing Santa Claus in on one of their fire engines. Falcon firefighters also donated some of their time during the breakfast with Santa to pass out plastic fireman hats.

“We continue to work to make the lives of these children and their families a little better at Christmas time,” said Berry. “I know it is just one morning in the lives of these kids, but the memories will hopefully last a lifetime.”

VRHS Show Choir Takes Top Spot at Regional Competition

By David Nancarrow
Director of Communications

The Vista Ridge High School Show Choir is showing off some new hardware in its rapidly growing collection of awards at VRHS. The group of student performers rolled into Scottsbluff, Nebraska the first weekend of November for the annual Old West Show Choir Competition, and rolled out as the Grand Champion of the event.

“Bringing back the first place trophy feels like home for our kids and shows that they have found a home away from home,” said Shawna Quinn, choir director. “They are so proud because this is an activity they are confident and comfortable in and can show their true selves.”

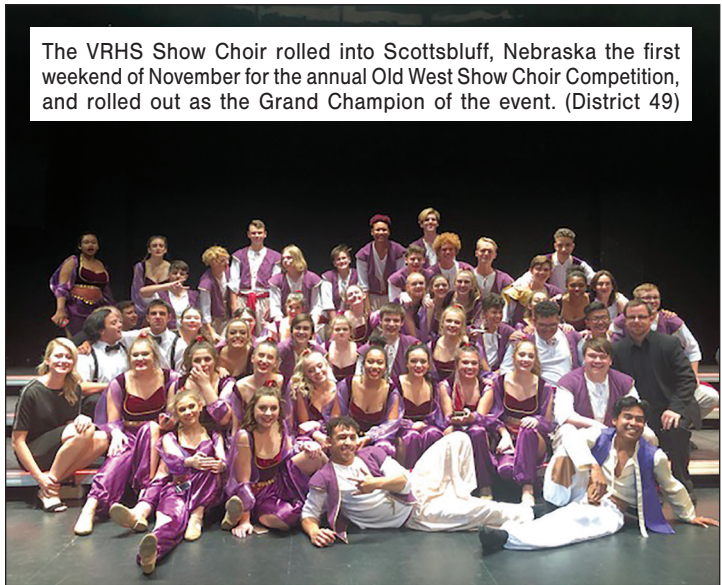
VRHS competed against 26 schools from multiple regions across Nebraska and Colorado in multiple categories. Their theme of Music from the Movies included a collection of songs from the films: A Star is Born, Bohemian Rhapsody, Moulin Rouge, and Aladdin. The group earned the top score and Gold Trophy for

their performance in the initial competition. The singers topped that, earning an appearance in the finals where they were awarded first place overall, walking away with the Best of the Fest title, earning high marks for choreography. Singers Diego Sosa and Eden Jordan were also named Best Soloists of the competition.

“This was by far the most rewarding experience I’ve had at a competition,” said Eden Jordan, junior soloist. “It makes me sad that next year will be my last one as a senior. Winning best soloist was truly unexpected and I’m so thankful that my hard work paid off.”

Event organizers explain the history of the Old West Choir Fest reaches back 35 years, beginning as a band competition, show choir competition and hot air balloon race. The choir competition still takes place the first weekend of November offering participating student singers a day of education as performing ensembles paired with some friendly competition.

This is the second consecutive year VRHS earned the Grand Champion title in the Old West Choir Fest.



Falcon Zone Educators Bring Tech to Schools and Classroom

By David Nancarrow
Director of Communications

Firebird Nation Campus Executive Principal Brian Smith and Aaron Lentner, Meridian Ranch Elementary School third-grade teacher are both finalists for top recognition by the National Council on Digital Convergence. According to the NCDC, Smith and Lentner exemplify modern learning at the school and classroom level, respectively.

Working with the nationally recognized Modern Teacher platform, the Falcon Zone deploys digital convergence on its campuses through the EmpowerFZ model, which the FZ developed to meet the needs of the current generation of learners.

“Students don’t learn the same way today,” Smith said. “We want to provide them those cutting-edge opportunities to really meet their needs, but give them those skills for the future.”

“It’s about engaging students with what we have with the influx of technology, and how much you can do with that,” Lentner added.

Smith, who is a finalist for the Change Management Principal of the Year award, explained the progress taking

place within the Falcon Zone is a direct result of the buy-in and hard work of the teachers in the FZ.

“My staff are working so hard,” Smith shared. “I am so proud of all my teachers in the work they’re doing to continue to drive and push, and that has been rewarding to see we are providing those things for kids.”

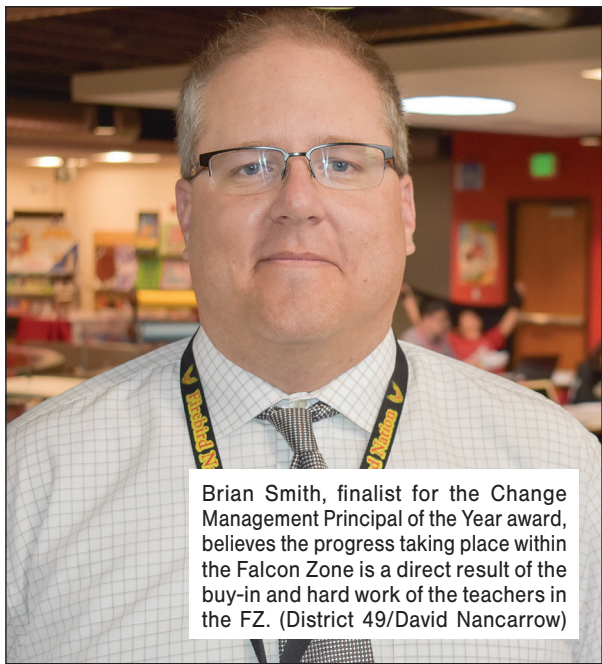
As a finalist in the category of Personalized Learning Classroom of the Year, Lentner is recognized for creating an environment for a tech-savvy group of students.

“It’s really about harnessing technology, getting them to work collaboratively with each other, bringing out that creativity and getting away from the paper and pencil worksheets, and really doing things they’re going to be excited about,” he explained.

Smith and Lentner will attend the NCDC20 conference in February where they, along with four other finalists, will learn who will take home top honors.

“This is so cool,” Smith said. “It’s humbling, and honoring, and so neat to think ‘wow I’m making the difference I wanted to make.’”

“It’s a really humbling thing, and I’m excited to go to the conference and learn from others and share our ideas,” Lenter shared. “It’s an exciting time to be a teacher.”



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Nice work, Falcon High football team!

In the spirit of giving, the players adopted families in need and delivered their goodies and gifts to Woodmen Hills Elementary Dec. 20. Thanks to their holiday joy, more D49 families spent the season feeling merry and bright! (District 49/Amy Matissek - Photo Credit: Falcon High School Athletic Dept.)

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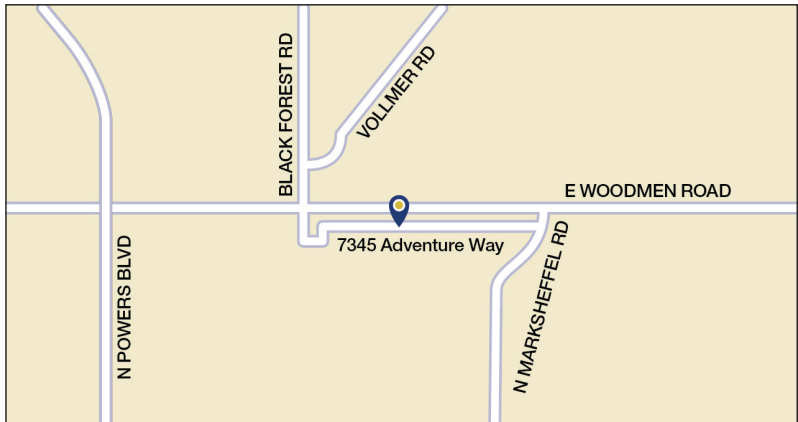
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★ RANCHETTES OFFERED ★



★ UNIQUE FEATURES ★

- Majestic views of Pikes Peak, Front Range, The Plains, Sunsets, Sunrises, and the Bountiful Wildlife.
- Water Rights Included and Electric provided to your property boundary line.
- Select Ranchettes have Private Ponds, Water Views, and Views of Sangre de Cristo Mountains & The Spanish Peaks.
- Attractive Entryways & vinyl 3 rail fencing.
- Reasonably Covenanted for the perfect balance of protecting your values, views, & enjoyment all awhile designed to enjoy the freedoms of land.
- Riding trails throughout entire property for miles of extended riding.
- And so much more... 35 AC. Ranchettes starting at only \$150,000!

LIMITED INVENTORY-PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITES AND CONTACT US FOR MORE DETAILS.



Dan Carless, Sr. | 719-505-4605 | DanC@CoronadoRealtyAdvisors.com
LAND, THE ORIGINAL AMERICAN DREAM!