

# Board Moves to Get Kids Out of Failing Middle School Building

by **Dr. Randy Trani**  
Superintendent

**OVER THE WINTER BREAK** the district closed access to Classroom #1 in the middle school building due to “significant structural concerns” noted by Forensic Building Consultants. This is the second time in a few years that students have had to be removed from a portion of the building due to crumbling building systems that are approaching 100 years in age and have far exceeded their useful life. This particular event includes deterioration and failure of portions of the unreinforced masonry foundation, compression of floor joists, failure of sill plates, lack of wall to wall and wall to floor joist connections, wall sheathing failure, as well as significant water intrusion through the buckling stucco cladding across large portions of the south and east walls. The building has served Corbett students well for ten decades but because of its age and outdated construction techniques it now is a hazard that endangers students rather than keeps them safe.

For years the board and district have recognized the ever growing need to remove students from the facility. At the start of this year, in order to reduce the number of students who were placed at greater risk on a daily basis by

occupying the middle school, the district created the 8/9 Academy in the current high school. Eighth grade students now spend their days in the structurally sound high school building. Throughout the fall and early winter, and before this latest building failure, the board has worked to purchase the Natural Resource Center from the Reynolds School District. Reynolds School District accepted the Corbett School Board’s offer to purchase the property which includes approximately 14,000 square feet of usable building space. These buildings have previously been used by both Corbett School District and Reynolds School District to educate students.

Conditions of the sale include a lengthy inspection and land use review period which the Corbett School District is conducting at the time of this newspaper publication. At this point in the inspection period no significant issues have been found with regard to the property. In fact, although it is not currently configured for classrooms of 25-30 students, the buildings at the Natural Resource Center are safer today for students and staff than the middle school building has been for decades. The Natural Resource Center is safer from multiple standpoints including seismic safety, environmental safety, as

well as fire and life safety. Further, the Natural Resource Center is more compliant with the American’s with Disabilities Act as well as Title IX than the current middle school building.

If the inspections and land use review period continue on course the board will finance the purchase and remodeling of the Natural Resource Center with a \$3 million dollar loan in order that remaining students can vacate the middle school sometime next school year. The loan will provide funds to cover the purchase price of \$500,000, allow the district to make interior renovations to the existing buildings, move the high school office on the main campus to the high school building, as well as work to develop a large student activity space such as a gym/cafeteria on site at the Natural Resource Center.

In the short term, loan repayment can be achieved through the use of the new Student Investment Account dollars from the state of Oregon. Practically speaking it is difficult for districts to support the long term payment schedule associated with capital projects through general fund dollars like those earmarked to pay for this loan. Typically, communities pay for capital projects with the passage of bonds. The pressing need to get students into safer facilities prompted the board to take this action hoping that the community will support a capital improvement bond anticipated to be floated in November of 2020. If the bond does not pass, the district will continue to pay the loan from the general fund.

The anticipated bond ask in November of 2020 would be for a small bond of approximately \$3-\$6 million dollars with a short payback period of approximately five years. The district

will also work to apply for the Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching Program (OSCIM Program) which could provide up to an additional \$4 million dollars of matching free funding for capital projects provided Corbett residents pass a bond in November of 2020. The proceeds from the bond, and possible matching dollars from the OSCIM grant, would pay back the \$3 million dollar loan and could provide funding for capital improvements on the main campus such as roof replacement on the grade school, seismic upgrades in the multi-purpose building, ADA and Title IX upgrades across campus, field upgrades, etc.

During the short payback period of the small 2020 bond, the district is targeting further “right sizing” of the district, a modification of the AP for All program, and an increase in Career Technical Education (CTE) courses commensurate with the recommendations from independent consultant Rob Saxton. The hope would be that after the small bond was paid off a larger more complete bond package would pass to facilitate the total replacement of the current middle school building on the main campus. It has been suggested that the new replacement building could be a three grade level high school allowing the current high school building to be the permanent home of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade middle school as well as the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade academy; although those decisions are years away. Finally, after the reunification of the middle school students back on the main campus approximately five to seven years in the future the Natural Resource Center could be converted into a center for CTE coursework, community space, an agriculture center, or any number of uses.



Former Reynolds Resource Center

## Summer Works

by **Cathy Noles**,  
YTP Specialist

**SUMMER WORKS** is a vocational rehab grant program that puts students to work during the summer. Corbett High School Youth Transition Program (YTP) has participated in Summer Works for the last two years, and has employed several students for six to eight weeks between June and September. All year Cathy Noles, the Corbett YTP Transition Specialist, works with local businesses to employ students. Menucha, Sound Equestrian, Leamy Printing & Design, the Historical Lavender Farm, Going Gaming, Heckmann & Thiemann Automotive, Sugarpine Drive-In, and Old McDonald’s Farm are a few. Students are placed in jobs based on their personal interests, needs, and strengths (PINS).

The Corbett School District received a grant from the Department of Human Services Office of Vocational Rehab for up to \$23,279.00 to employ staff members to provide job exploration, job training, job-place coaching, and sustainable paid employment for students on Individualized Education Plans (IEP’s) and 504’s. The grant also pays for each student to receive a competitive hourly wage and supports transportation needs a student might have living in a rural area that lacks mass transit.

We were happy to learn that the Summer Works grant has been extended for the summer of 2020 to employ eight Corbett students. The agreement was extended by DHS on the satisfaction with performance of the work and services provided by Corbett School District. We are looking forward to pre-employment training and sustainable employment for these students

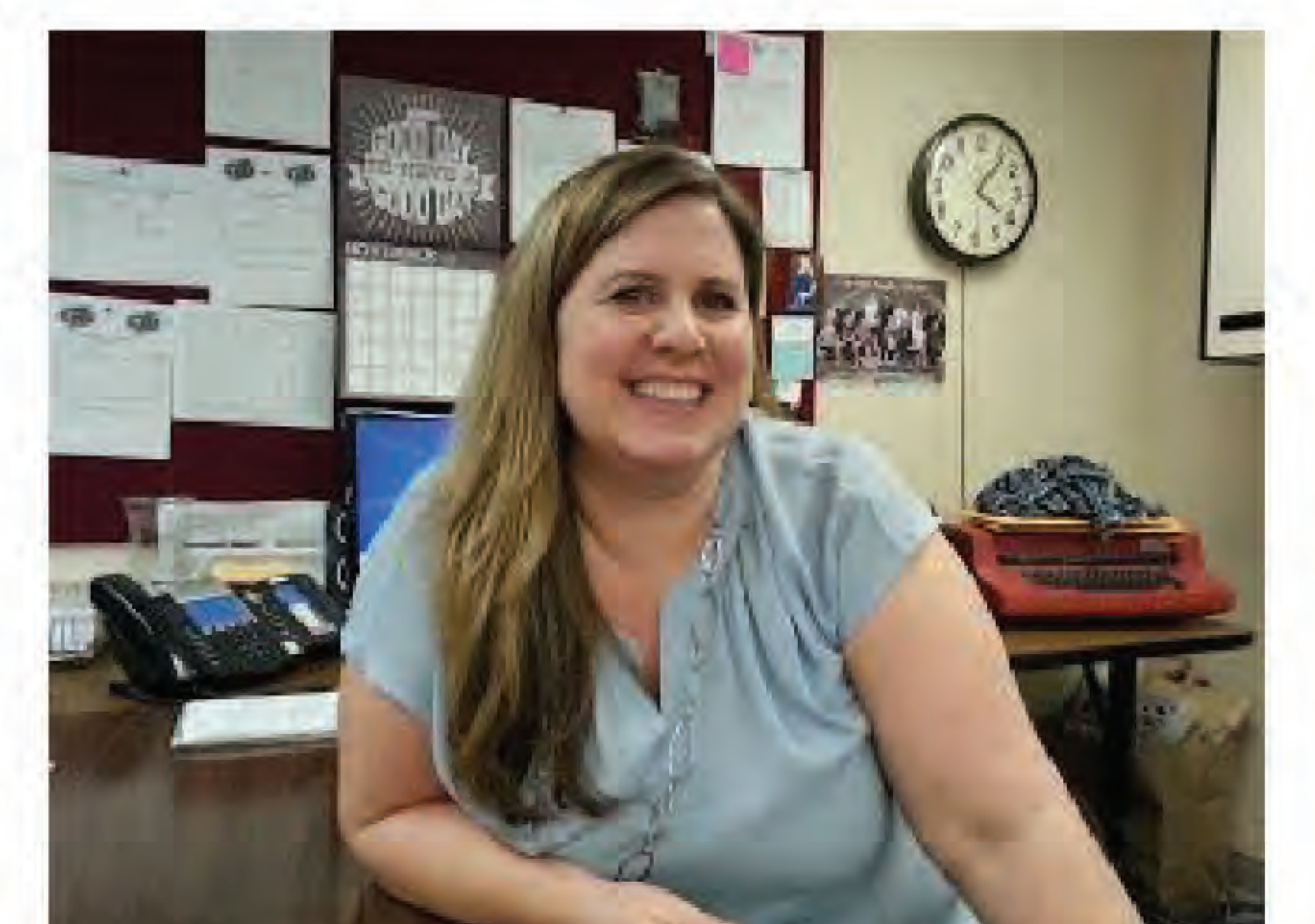


Summer Works Application

## Second Generation Employee

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by **Michelle Smith**,  
Corbett Connector

**FOR ALL WHO ENTER**, Erin’s beautiful smile greets them as they walk into the Corbett Middle School. Erin was born in Portland and moved to Corbett at the tender age of three, moving into a home on NE 365th. She now resides in Gresham. Erin attended Corbett Schools from K-12. Graduating in 1990, Erin went to Mt. Hood Community College and then left to work full time at US Bank for seven years. Meeting her husband Jeff at age 17, they married in 1996. Goofing around as teenagers, he jumped into her car and introduced himself. The rest is history! When Erin gave birth to their daughter Courtney, now age 20, she stayed home full-time. It was not until Courtney was in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade that she began to work again outside of the home. It all began as being a substitute, working in the office, on the playground, and in the school kitchen. In 2013, Erin was hired as the secretary of the Corbett Middle and High School. She is kept plenty busy with answering phones, registration, record keeping, mailing out progress reports, preparing for substitute teachers, working on student files, delivering notes, passing out ice and band-aids, and also building relationships with students. Erin’s mother Jan worked at the school for many years, also working in the front office. Erin tries her best to keep track of all the comings and goings of students. She laughingly says that she and her family sleep in Gresham, but she lives in Corbett! On the rare occasion of having nothing on the calendar, she says she loves to snuggle on the couch with a good book!



Erin Gibbs