

A never-ending process

Written by Deb Egenberger
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Activities director spends summer preparing for next school year

The classrooms are empty.

It's that time of year when the school building breathes a sigh of relief after 10 months of non-stop activity.

Summer basketball leagues, Swede sports camps and off-season training routines keep students wandering in and out of the weight room and gymnasium but organized activities are minimal in June and July.

"I'm thankful for the summer months when I can get the next year of activities laid out and organized," said Gothenburg High School activities director Seth Ryker.

While many other school staff members relax in the summer, take continuing education classes or even work another job, Ryker is on campus setting up the hundreds of activities students will participate in beginning next fall.

"I'm busy all year long," Ryker said, "but in the summer it's mostly clerical work."

That's what it takes to get the school district ready for a barrage of sporting events plus fine arts and other activities.

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“There aren’t many days on our school calendar that don’t have at least one activity,” Ryker said. “And most of the time, there are several on the same day.”

He points out one Monday next fall that will be filled with seven different school-sponsored events ranging from junior high sports to one-act plays.

“It’s a lot to keep straight,” he said.

Ryker begins with the calendar, making sure all dates and times correlate with contracts held with other schools and event officials.

Finding officials for non-varsity football, basketball, volleyball and wrestling can be difficult, he said, but people in Gothenburg and surrounding communities are willing volunteers.

“I never have to beg people to do things here,” Ryker said. “There are plenty of willing volunteers.”

Once the dates, contracts and officials are lined up, Ryker puts together a transportation schedule for all activities for the year.

“There are days when that can be quite a challenge,” he said, noting one school day last spring when the district had to cancel one of its regular bus routes because there were so many student activities going in different directions.

“I had every available bus, every van and every car on the road getting students from one place to another,” he said. “It can get pretty crazy.”

Once transportation is set, Ryker will compile the worker lists. In the fall, for example, that

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includes the football chain crew, volleyball lines judges, announcers, scorers, money takers and concessions workers.

“The community really backs the school activities,” he said. “I don’t have to twist arms.”

Technology has helped make Ryker’s job easier, even since he began his duties in Gothenburg in 2005.

He said there are scheduling computer programs that help organize activities as well as event reminders and patron calling systems.

It’s simply a matter of staying organized, he said.

“It’s nice to go and sit in the bleachers with my wife and watch my kids play,” he said.

The fact that his wife, Crystal, is willing to bring their three boys—Bailey, Crayton and Bryce—to the school during events helps make his job as activities director more enjoyable.

“If my family didn’t want to be at school with me so much, it would be really hard,” he said.

In his limited spare time, Ryker said he enjoys reading, exercising, golfing and watching his sons’ events.

“It’s fun to go and just be a dad and watch,” he said.