

NM School District rolls out app for smartphones

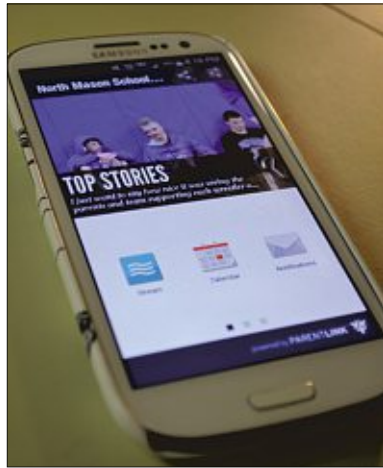
By ARLA SHEPHARD
MASON COUNTY LIFE

With just a few swipes on their smartphone, North Mason parents are now able to check their student's grades, learn about upcoming school events and even shop online for Bulldogs gear.

The North Mason School District debuted its first app for Apple and Android phones last month, and the district is eager for parents and community members to start downloading.

"All districts are trying to look at how to have as many avenues as possible to get information out to our parents," said Superintendent Dana Rosenbach. "One of the things that's really cool with the app is we can do push notices. This was really a way to have another tool for families."

Parents can set up their



North Mason School District debuted a new app for Apple and Android phones. The app allows parents and students to check grades, scroll through Facebook stories, browse their school's calendar and more.

PHOTO BY ARLA SHEPHARD

app to alert them to circumstances such as bad weather notices, which are now typically sent out through the district's K-12 alert system via email or phone call, depending on what parents have selected.

Parents and students can also link the app to a Skyward account, the district's online grade and attendance website.

"I can set it up to beep me if my daughter's lunch account is out of money or if I want to know if she has an F or a C, or even a B-," Rosenbach said. "We also want to eventually have a more interactive calendar, though parents can now add events from the app to their phone's calendar."

Rosenbach and the district's new technology di-

rector Clint Forsyth, both of whom started in July, began discussing the app in September and have researched different platforms that other districts use.

The North Mason app is powered through the company ParentLink.

"South Kitsap has an app and some other districts across the state are starting to as well," Rosenbach said. "Vancouver Public Schools uses ParentLink and they are seen as a leader of technology in the state. When I knew Vancouver was using it, I had a lot of faith in the app."

Forsyth liked the format of ParentLink as well, noting that it appears to look both professional and hi-tech.

The new technology director has been tasked with creating a multi-year technology plan for the district this spring, which will include updating the district's website and technology in-

frastructure throughout all of the buildings.

The district also plans to review its policies to allow students to use their smartphones in the classroom, in alignment with recommended state policies, and will look at changing graduation requirements to require at least a half credit of an online course, Rosenbach said.

"In many ways we need to work with the grownups because there's a fear of what will happen if kids bring their phones in the classroom," she said.

Many teachers and parents have concerns over bullying or other issues, but Rosenbach cautions against blaming the tools rather than the behavior.

"If kids use the Cloud or the Internet to bully, that's an amplification of a problem that was already there," she said. "You can use a pen and pencil for evil, just like

you can use a smartphone."

As for graduation requirements, many students go on to colleges, universities or even military careers that require them to be able to upload and use online tools like Cloud products.

"There are some skills online that you have to learn these days," Rosenbach said. "I'm not worried about our kids. Our kids will do what we ask them to do."

Forsyth is looking forward to the role technology will play in the district in the future.

"We're excited for the new high school to be built and all the new technology that will accompany that," he said. "It's exciting times."

Parents, students, teachers and community members can download the app by searching for "North Mason School District" through their phone's Apple or Google Play store. ■



PHOTO COURTESY OF JACK HUGGINS

Members of Mount Moriah Lodge No. 11 visited Sound to Harbor Head Start again by furnishing brand new coats, hats and boots for students in the classrooms to help keep them

Mount Moriah Lodge supplies coats, hats and boots to Head Start kids

SHELTON — Mount Moriah Lodge No. 11 helped out Sound to Harbor Head Start again by furnishing brand new coats, hats and boots for students in the classrooms to help keep them

warm for the winter months ahead.

"Shelton Head Start asked if we could assist in this need and we were glad to help them out," said Jack Huggins, master of Mount Moriah Lodge No. 11.

There to assist were Mount Moriah members Charles Smith, Jim Durand, Ray Bedford, Robert Shaw, Allen Crick, Jeff Vangundy, Brian Bigelow, Don Anicker and Jack Huggins.

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