



## Celebrating Our Staff

"We can take a kid that comes to us in a pretty rough way and we can give them hope. Sometimes it takes a little work to see there's hope but we can do it. We can get them to graduate."

-Tim Touhey, Retiring Principal, Lewis County Alternative School/Turning Point and Green Hill Academic

**Tim Touhey: A Career Of Finding Hope**

### Tim Touhey

Thursdays at Green Hill Academic are graduation days and one of Principal Tim Touhey's favorite days. Any resident who has reached enough credits to earn their high school diploma gets the chance to sit in front of a small group of friends, family and staff in a cap and gown and be honored for this achievement. It's an intimate moment where those closest to the graduate get a chance to talk about them, then the graduate gets to address those gathered before finally turning their tassel from one side of their cap to the other and receiving their diploma.

For Touhey, some of these gatherings are incredibly moving and remind him and his staff why they do what they do.

"We can take a kid that comes to us in a pretty rough way and we can give them hope. Sometimes it takes a little work to see there's hope but we can do it. We can get them to graduate," he said.

Touhey, the Principal of Green Hill School, Turning Point (Lewis County Alternative School), and Lewis County Juvenile Detention School, retires this year after a 36-year career with the Chehalis School District. It is a career built on helping many students find hope where there seemed like none existed.

### Choosing an Education Career

Originally from Kirkland, Touhey doesn't remember the exact moment he decided to go into the educational field, but being a teacher was a long-time goal for him.

"I think it was always in the back of my mind," Touhey said.

After graduating high school, he went to [Western Washington University](#) at first intending to be a music teacher. A few months in, he no longer found music fun with the intense amount of playing and studying involved in that degree. Touhey took what he called a "Swiss Army Knife" business administration course and completed a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration. He graduated in December of 1982, in the midst of a severe economic recession where the Northwest saw the highest unemployment rates since the end of World War II. Touhey's best job option was managing two gas stations in Bellevue.

A pivotal moment for Touhey came when the owner of the gas stations offered to sell him one of the locations. He decided that if he purchased the gas station, he would never become a teacher as he had intended. Instead of accepting the offer, he drove to Ellensburg and enrolled at [Central Washington University](#), where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Marketing Education and then a Master of Education in Business and Marketing Education.

Touhey joined the Chehalis School District two weeks after his wedding in 1988 to Colleen, who is also retiring this year after 14 years in the Chehalis School District. Besides her dedication to the students she served, Tim said Colleen's support at home allowed him to have the career he has had.

Tim Touhey started at W.F. West High School, first teaching marketing and business. Over time, he coached girls soccer (coaching the first Lewis County high school soccer team ever to make it to State), served as Career and Technical Education (CTE) director, was Dean of Students and then Assistant Principal.



### Principal Touhey

Touhey took on his current position at Green Hill and Lewis County Juvenile Detention in 2011. Green Hill School is one of only two like schools in Washington State. It is a medium/maximum secure rehabilitation facility housing older male youth and young adults run by the Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families. By law, the Chehalis School District has to provide educational services there because Green Hill is located within the district's boundaries, so its students reside in the Chehalis School District. About 28 Chehalis staff members work at Green Hill and 2 work at Lewis County Juvenile Detention.

At Green Hill, students have access to year-round school and can earn their high school diploma or their GED. There are career and technical education offerings include welding, auto shop, construction pre-apprenticeship, and hair design. Young people who have completed high school can also earn a degree through Centralia College or take a class offered by Evergreen State College. However, the daily work in this environment is a challenge. Students often come to them with transcripts that don't look like traditional high school transcripts, with significant learning gaps and often having given up too young on the idea of ever graduating.

"You have to redefine some measures of success. We have some measures that the Federal government gives us and they're reasonably applicable but there's definitely a lot of places where we build our own," Touhey said.

But considering that it is estimated to cost about \$1 million to incarcerate someone for life, Touhey thinks the work at Green Hill Academic is invaluable.

"Every kid that graduates from high school is significantly protected from that. The amount of money the state spends on this school, if it keeps 4-5 guys from going to prison, the State of Washington has made a good investment," Touhey said.

### Founding an Alternative School

Soon after Touhey took over education at Green Hill and Juvenile Detention, discussions began within the Chehalis School District about the idea of starting an alternative high school. Touhey and other administrators at the time were looking to close a gap they knew existed in the Chehalis School District - how to help students for whom traditional schooling did not work.

"Somewhere in there, school started to become not just about inputs but about outcomes. It wasn't good enough to do a good job teaching kids, you had to prove they were learning things, too," Touhey said.

Touhey said the main barrier to opening an alternative school was who would teach there. The answer came when W.F. West Principal Bob Walters got a message from former Green Hill Counselor Cathy Hallenback looking for a letter of reference for a job. Walters and Touhey worked together to recruit Hallenback to be the first teacher at a new alternative school. Lewis County Alternative School, also known as [Turning Point](#), opened in 2014.

At Turning Point, students 11th grade and up who are in circumstances that make traditional schooling difficult get a chance to complete their high school credits in a learning environment that is more flexible and at least partially online based. These students are identified in a cooperative effort between W.F. West High School staff and Turning Point staff.

Touhey will officially step down from his duties at the end of June. When asked what he hoped his legacy would be, as he is known to do, he pointed directly to his staff. Touhey said it is these staff members who are the ones who make good things happen in these schools and he simply feels privileged to be part of the journey.

"Everything we do over there, everything we accomplish, it's all them. They're fantastic and they really understand that dichotomy of you have to care enough to be firm," Touhey said.

### Ryan Chosen to Fill Position

Kevin Ryan has been selected as the next principal of Green Hill Academic School, Turning Point Alternative School and Lewis County Juvenile Detention Center. He will begin his new duties on July 1, 2024.

During his 25 years in education, Kevin has experience as an educator, coach and principal at Adna High School and Onalaska High School and as an adjunct college instructor. He earned his Bachelor's Degree from [Western Washington University](#) and his Master's in Education in Educational Leadership from [Antioch University](#).

Prior to becoming a principal, Kevin spent time with the Chehalis School District where he was a Social Studies teacher at W.F. West High School for seven years (2001-2008). His principal experience also includes working with at-risk youth and having developed an alternative school at a previous district.

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