

Learn Here Heroes

HONOREE STATEMENTS

Behind every great achievement is a story worth telling—and the pages that follow bring those stories to life. These honoree statements, written by the institutions that know our honorees best, offer a heartfelt glimpse into the dedication, leadership, and inspiration that define this year's Learn Here Hero recipients.

More than just letters of support, these tributes celebrate the lasting impact each honoree has made on their school communities and beyond. They speak to the passion with which these individuals uplift others, the example they set, and the legacy they are building every day.

As you read, we invite you to join us in honoring not only what these heroes have accomplished, but who they are—and the difference they continue to make.

Battle Ground Public Schools

Battle Gound Public Schools serves over 13,000 students in north Clark County with 19 schools and a geographic span of 273 square miles.



DANIELA ALEXAKIS, Staff
Health and Fitness Teacher
Yacolt Primary School

Daniela is a dedicated educator who teaches far more than physical education—she inspires students to become well-rounded, confident individuals. Her passion for student wellness shines through in every interaction, making PE a highlight of the school day. Daniela's creativity and commitment led to the creation of the Yacolt Primary Running Club, which promotes physical activity, boosts student confidence, and strengthens school spirit. In just two months, her students collectively ran over 2,500 miles. Daniela's unwavering dedication has made a lasting impact on the Yacolt Primary community, leaving a legacy that will benefit students for years to come.



OLESEA NEAGA, Volunteer
Tukes Valley Primary School

Olesea volunteers every Monday in Ashley Seymour's second-grade classroom, where she supports small groups of students in developing their math skills through engaging and interactive games. Her presence consistently brings joy to the students, who eagerly anticipate working with her. Olesea takes the time to understand each child's strengths and areas for growth, regularly communicating with the teacher about student progress. Her dedication and thoughtful approach make her an invaluable part of the classroom community.

Camas School District

Situated on the banks of the Columbia River in Southwest Washington, Camas opened its first school in 1884 in a single room above a hardware store. Camas School District has since grown into a thriving system that supports approximately 7,350 students today.



SHAUNA RUSE, Staff
***Executive Assistant to the
Directors of Elementary and
Secondary Education***

At Camas School District, we strive to cultivate an inclusive environment where every student feels a sense of belonging, receives high-quality instruction, and is supported in their continuous growth. This vision is made possible through the dedication of exceptional individuals like Shauna Ruse. Shauna is more than an outstanding executive assistant—she is a leader, mentor, and advocate for students. Her administrative excellence ensures the district's leadership functions smoothly, but her impact goes well beyond logistics. As co-advisor to the Student Advisory Committee, she helps amplify student voices and champions equity and engagement. Her leadership as president of the Camas Education Foundation has also helped drive innovative programs and essential student support services. Shauna embodies the district's core values of excellence, equity, and community. Her intelligence, empathy, and steady leadership make her a trusted and valued team member. She fosters a collaborative culture, inspires her colleagues, and exemplifies the spirit of service that strengthens our schools and community.



JORGE MARTINEZ, Volunteer
PTO Fundraising Co-Chair

Jorge is an exemplary father, husband, friend, and community volunteer. His ability to connect with others through genuine care, attentive listening, and deep understanding makes him a pillar of the Camas school community. Jorge generously shares his expertise in finance, philanthropy, and leadership. As a leader at the Discovery HS Odyssey MS PTO, he has raised nearly \$10,000 for Project-Based Learning campus fundraising efforts. Over the past two years, he has co-chaired fundraising efforts and founded the annual Pi-Day fundraiser, bringing authentic learning experiences and community projects to life. Jorge also serves on multiple district committees, consistently approaching challenges with positivity and collaboration—whether it's installing a gaga pit or addressing complex budget concerns. His leadership, commitment, and servant heart make Jorge Martinez a truly deserving recipient of this community honor.

Evergreen Public Schools

Evergreen Public Schools is the 8th largest district in Washington State which serves more than 22,000 students across 39 schools including Henrietta Lacks Health and Bioscience High School and Cascadia Tech Academy.



JASON CASTRO, Staff
***Assistant Director of Student
Services and Athletics***

Jason is a passionate educator and leader whose career has been dedicated to supporting student achievement. As Assistant Director of Student Services and Athletics for Evergreen Public Schools, Jason engages with families in meaningful, empathetic ways—offering support and encouragement during both challenging and celebratory times. His positivity and can-do attitude leave a lasting impression on all who meet him. Driven by a vision to highlight and grow the sport of baseball in the region, Jason collaborated with coaches from Battle Ground, Columbia River, Hudson's Bay, and Union High Schools to form Clark County Baseball. This initiative culminated in the successful launch of the Baseballism Pacific Northwest Kickoff Classic, a multi-district tournament that brought players and communities together to celebrate the sport. Jason's focus on creating opportunities for youth reflects his commitment to the district's mission of "Belonging for Each, Success for All." His leadership and enthusiasm are inspiring, making him a deserving recipient of this recognition.



KYLE ROGERS, Volunteer
***Associate Principal, LSW
Architects; Director of Design
CoMission***

Kyle brings vision, energy, and opportunity to the Evergreen Public Schools College, Career, and Technical Education (CCTE) program. As Associate Principal at LSW Architects and Director of Design CoMission, Kyle has played a vital role in shaping this internship-based program that introduces students to the fields of architecture and design. Since 2014, more than 200 high school interns from across Clark County have participated in the program, collaborating on real-world design projects—from community centers and libraries to schools and shelters. Students work in diverse teams, gaining hands-on experience, problem-solving skills, and exposure to potential career paths. Kyle also serves as a Co-Chair of the CCTE General Advisory and has been an active member of the district's Architecture and Construction Advisory Board, ensuring students receive equitable access to meaningful opportunities.

Kyle's advocacy for student engagement and equity, particularly within Washington's largest CCTE program, has had a profound impact. His leadership continues to inspire a new generation of creators, innovators, and changemakers.

Hockinson School District

The Hockinson School District, at the foothills of the Cascade Range, serves over 2,000 students and carries on a tradition of preparing all students for lifelong success. Offering a wide variety of academic pathways and a high graduation rate, which is above 94 percent.



JENNIFER HERMANN, Volunteer
**Library Technician, Hockinson
Heights Elementary School**

Jennifer “Jenny” is a remarkable and dedicated member of the Hockinson Heights Elementary team. As the school’s Library Technician, she manages a dynamic and welcoming library environment that serves more than 900 students. Jenny supports both staff and students with a consistently positive, can-do attitude, ensuring that the library remains a vibrant hub of learning and exploration. Her efforts enrich the educational experience for the entire school community.



BECKY KORNELL, Volunteer
**Community and School
Volunteer**

Becky is a driving force of positivity and service in the Hockinson community. Her willingness to step in and help—whether as a substitute teacher or event organizer—makes her an indispensable part of the school district. Becky plays a vital role in coordinating community events such as the holiday tree lighting, Fun Days carnival, and Earth Day Community Clean-Up. Her kindness, reliability, and enthusiasm have a ripple effect throughout Hockinson, making her a cherished and deeply appreciated volunteer.

La Center School District

La Center School District, in rural Northwest Clark County, serves roughly 1,700 students and is situated along the east fork of the Lewis River. La Center has national acclaim among football fans as originator of the fast-moving “Wildcat” offense.



STACEY ROY, Staff
La Center Middle School

Stacey has made a significant and lasting impact on La Center Middle School in her nearly three years with the school. As the ASB and Leadership class advisor, Stacey brings fresh ideas, energy, and a passion for student engagement. Under her leadership, school assemblies have become more dynamic and inclusive—ranging from spirited pep rallies to meaningful events such as the Veterans Day assembly. Her students have recently launched a weekly video news segment, helping to build school-wide communication and pride. Stacey also played a key role in organizing the annual 5th grade transition tours, earning high praise from colleagues for her coordination and creativity, which included participation from the middle school band and choir. Stacey is a true team player, always seeking innovative ways to make learning engaging and relevant. La Center is fortunate to have her on staff.



KEITH STEVENS, Volunteer
Volunteer Coach

Master Sergeant Keith Stevens, a Quality Assurance Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge with the United States Air Force, has long balanced his military career with a deep commitment to coaching young athletes. His coaching journey began in 2001 but was interrupted by a deployment after 9/11. Upon returning in 2004, he resumed coaching football, basketball, and track, continuing through 2012 before stepping back. After nearly a decade away, Keith returned to coaching in 2021 as a volunteer for the middle school football and basketball teams. By 2023, he had advanced to volunteer coaching roles at the high school level. For Keith, coaching is more than a pastime, it is a mission. He uses sports as a vehicle to teach life lessons in perseverance, teamwork, discipline, and resilience. Sharing this experience with his son and his peers has been especially meaningful.

Keith Stevens' commitment to mentoring youth and supporting their growth both on and off the field has left a powerful imprint on La Center's student-athletes and community.

Ridgefield School District

Ridgefield School District in Northwest Clark County serves approximately 3,900 students in one of the state's fastest growing communities. Its mascot is the Spudders, honoring the region's agricultural heritage.



ANGIE GAUB, Staff
**Principal, Union Ridge
Elementary**

With a rare combination of compassion and strategic leadership, Angie has transformed Union Ridge Elementary into a thriving, inclusive learning community. As principal for the past six years, Angie has created a culture where students feel seen, staff are supported, and families are engaged. Her focus on equity and high expectations has led to remarkable academic gains—including a 7% increase in English Language Arts proficiency and a 28.8% increase in Math proficiency over the past four years. Under Angie's leadership, the school has significantly narrowed achievement gaps for students experiencing poverty—by 37.5% in Language Arts and 49% in Math. Her investment in professional development has empowered teachers through structured learning teams, coaching, and training. She also uplifts emerging leaders, particularly women pursuing administrative credentials, and serves as a trusted advisor to her principal colleagues. Whether co-leading a districtwide curriculum adoption or mentoring new administrators, Angie models integrity, excellence, and joy. Though she never seeks recognition, her impact is deeply felt and widely respected. Angie is one of the many reasons it's great to be a Ridgefield Tater Tot!



MARGIE STONER, Volunteer
**Volunteer – Weekend Food Bag
Program Coordinator**

For over 15 years, Margie Stoner has quietly and consistently ensured that Ridgefield students never go hungry. After recognizing a need, Margie partnered with Union Ridge Elementary's counselor, Nicky Dunn, to create a weekend food bag program. With the support of her church, Margie organized donations, shopped for food, and personally delivered the bags each week. As Nicky Dunn shared, "Margie was the driving force behind the program. She made sure students received healthy food they would actually eat and was always willing to accommodate last-minute needs. She was a behind-the-scenes asset who benefited so many." Now stepping down, Margie has passed the program to a dedicated team at Ridgefield United Methodist Church, which has named the initiative in her honor: The Margie Stoner Feed My Sheep Ministry. Her vision, compassion, and commitment have had a lasting impact on countless students and families, and her legacy will continue to nourish the Ridgefield community for years to come.

Vancouver Public Schools

Vancouver Public Schools is at the heart of Vancouver serving 22,000 students across 23 elementary schools, 6 middle schools, 5 high schools, an arts school, a STEM school and three additional programs.



CHELSEA UNGER, Staff
**School-Based Mental Health
Therapist**

Chelsea is a creative, strength-based mental health therapist whose work is grounded in authentic relationship-building with students, staff, and families. She has a unique talent for supporting students who are struggling—meeting them where they are, empowering them to develop coping skills, and building on their individual strengths. Chelsea is a vocal advocate for mental health awareness, helping to destigmatize mental health needs and promote access to services for all students. Her approach is marked by unconditional acceptance and respect for each individual she serves. Chelsea's impact is especially powerful for students furthest from educational justice—she has helped improve attendance, reduce disciplinary actions, and raise academic aspirations. Her work is a model of how mental health support can transform school communities.



MARIA GALLARDO, Volunteer
Community School Volunteer

Maria is a cherished and essential part of our school community. She supports her son's classroom, helps bridge communication with Spanish-speaking families, and ensures that all parents feel welcomed and included. Maria is instrumental in organizing school events, coordinating donations, and enhancing the school environment with her artistic talents. In addition to creating beautiful crafts and decorations, Maria helps run several student clubs. Her creativity, humility, and generous spirit are recognized and appreciated by every staff member. She exemplifies selfless service and brings warmth and joy to everything she does. Maria is truly one of the most caring and committed volunteers at our school.

Washougal School District

Washougal School District, in Southeast Clark County, serves about 2,700 students and is situated at the gateway to the scenic Columbia River Gorge.



DANA WILSON, Staff
English Language Learner
Paraeducator

Dana is a dedicated paraeducator who supports English Language Learner (ELL) students in developing the language skills necessary for academic success. She builds strong, trusting relationships with her students, helping them grow in confidence and fluency. Dana's support not only accelerates their language development but also fosters a deeper connection to school. Beyond her role in the classroom, Dana gives her time to several community organizations, including the Washougal Schools Foundation, Club Unite!, and various booster groups. Her volunteerism reflects her deep commitment to creating more opportunities for youth in Washougal and supporting their overall well-being.



MELANIE WILSON, Volunteer
Community School Mentor
Program Volunteer

Melanie has partnered with staff member Barb Seaman to co-create a mentoring program at Washougal High School that pairs adult volunteers with students. This program has led to measurable improvements in student confidence and academic performance. Recently, the initiative expanded to include students at Gause Elementary School, demonstrating its growing impact. Melanie's dedication, vision, and belief in the power of mentorship continue to create meaningful connections and opportunities for students across the district.

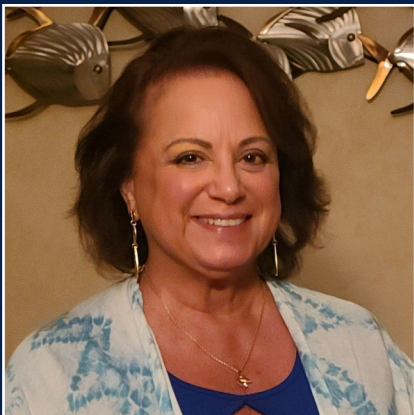
Clark College

Clark College is Southwest Washington's largest public institution of higher education. Students can earn high school diplomas, GEDs, certificates, and degrees in a variety of programs including nursing and dental hygiene. Clark's Running Start program enrolls high school students so they can earn college credit for little or no cost.



SCOT HEADLEY, Staff
**Dean of Business and
Health Sciences**

Since joining Clark College in 2023, Dean Scot Headley has exemplified the college's mission to transform lives, strengthen communities, and build the workforce of the future. With over four decades of experience in higher education, Scot oversees a wide array of programs—from associate degrees in Accounting, Business, and Nursing to bachelor's degrees in Business Management and Dental Hygiene. In his first year, Scot led the launch of the college's new Surgical Technology program, revived the Radiologic Technology program in collaboration with healthcare partners, aligned curricula with K–12 educators in allied health, and organized a regional Healthcare Pathways Summit. His forward-thinking leadership and ability to forge strong partnerships have earned him deep appreciation from both industry and academic stakeholders. Scot's dedication is helping to secure Clark College's place as a leader in meeting the region's healthcare and business workforce needs.



NANETTE WALKER, Volunteer
**Clark College Foundation
Board Member**

Nanette Walker, Class of 1975, is a dynamic leader whose decades-long service to education and the community has made a profound impact. A Certified Public Accountant and owner of NWCPA, Nanette has applied her financial expertise to the Clark College Foundation, where she has served as a dedicated board member since 2013 and currently chairs the Finance Committee. Her strategic leadership has helped ensure the Foundation's financial stability and growth—directly supporting scholarships and institutional initiatives. Nanette's influence extends far beyond Clark, as she serves in key roles with organizations such as the Southwest Washington Chapter of the American Red Cross, Washington State University Vancouver, and The Vancouver Festival Association. Her tireless advocacy for education and community resilience continues to benefit Southwest Washington in countless ways.

Cornerstone Christian Academy

Cornerstone Christian Academy for Learning and Leadership. CCA fosters a Christ-centered, innovative learning environment that ranks well above national averages. Cornerstone equips students to think, learn, and lead from a Biblical worldview.



SARAH THULIN, Staff
Executive Secretary/Registrar
Admissions and Records

Sarah is the "heart" of Cornerstone; she is truly one of the kindest individuals you will ever meet. She has been with Cornerstone for a total of 19 years, having originally served as an elementary teacher before transitioning to her current role in 2015. Sarah is the glue that keeps the school running, the school's MVP. Her character, positive attitude, exceptional skill set, and consistent dedication exemplify the qualities of a distinguished employee. Sarah Thulin is the very definition of a servant leader, giving her all and completing every task with a heartfelt commitment.



SUSAN ISAACSON, Volunteer
CCA Volunteer

Susan is a valued and long-standing volunteer at Cornerstone Christian Academy. She has been generously giving her time to the school for as long as anyone can remember. Sue serves students with a constant smile and a heart full of service. Her positive influence on students and her servant's heart are evident in everything she does. Sue's kind words and positive outlook reveal the depth of her character. Her willingness to volunteer reflects her dedication to the small details that make the school a special place for everyone. Sue is truly appreciated and loved by all at CCA!

Washington School for the Deaf

The Washington School for the Deaf is the State of Washington's sole ASL-English bilingual institution, serving 107 deaf and hard of hearing students in Pre-K through 12th grade from communities across the state.



EDELMIRA FERNANDEZ, Staff
Custodian

It is a pleasure to nominate Edelmira Fernandez, a dedicated custodian at Washington School for the Deaf, for the Learn Here Hero Award. Edelmira's unwavering commitment to the school community and her exceptional contributions makes her a standout candidate for this honor. Her daily efforts ensure that our school remains a safe, clean, and welcoming environment for both students and staff. Edelmira embodies the qualities of a true Learn Here Hero. Her dedication, compassion, and tireless work ethic have left an indelible mark on our school community. Edelmira consistently goes above and beyond her role as a custodian, exemplifying the very qualities this award seeks to recognize.



NANCY SINKOVITZ, Volunteer
D.E.A.F. Board Member and
CDHY Board of
Trustees Member

Nancy has a long history with Washington School for the Deaf (WSD) and Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Youth (CDHY). She began visiting WSD as a child, as her parents worked in the residential program. After spending nearly 27 years working in the residential department herself, Nancy retired from WSD in 2014. She immediately immersed herself in volunteer work and advocacy for our school in two significant roles. She serves as Vice President of the Deaf Education Advocates Foundation (D.E.A.F.) and has been a member of the CDHY Board of Trustees, appointed by Governor Jay Inslee, since 2014. Nancy's tireless efforts to fundraise through her work with D.E.A.F. and advocate for deaf and hard of hearing children through her role on the Board of Trustees are remarkable. Last year, she led a large fundraising campaign to secure critical funding for our new playground. She is currently serving on a committee to raise funds for a new Science and Technology classroom on campus. Nancy's fierce love and dedication to our students are unparalleled. We are incredibly grateful for her stewardship and leadership.

WSU Vancouver

WSU Vancouver, one of six campuses in the Washington State University system, is the only four-year research university in Southwest Washington. It combines the strengths of a major research institution with the support of a smaller campus, offering undergraduate and graduate education that serve the Clark County region.



BRENDA ALLING, Staff
**Director of Marketing
and Communications**

Brenda plays a central role in shaping WSU Vancouver's enrollment and retention strategies. With deep institutional knowledge and a strong commitment to student success, she crafts communications that resonate with both prospective and current students—ensuring that each message is authentic, impactful, and aligned with the university's values. Beyond her marketing expertise, Brenda is instrumental in planning and executing major campus events, including commencement ceremonies, which consistently reflect the pride and achievements of the WSU Vancouver community. Her attention to detail and ability to create meaningful experiences are unmatched. As the university's media liaison, Brenda handles public relations with professionalism, ensuring that WSU Vancouver is represented with clarity and confidence. Her thoughtful and proactive approach has earned widespread respect both on campus and in the wider community. Among her many roles, Brenda is also known as the “plant lady”—serving as the public face of Titan VanCoug, WSU Vancouver's famously frequent-blooming corpse flower. Her engaging storytelling has turned the plant—and herself—into a minor local celebrity. Brenda's blend of strategic leadership, creativity, and institutional dedication makes her an invaluable member of the WSU Vancouver team.



DAVID CLAUSEN, Volunteer
Cougar Food Pantry Volunteer

David made an immediate impact when he first introduced himself in July 2024 at a foundation event for the Cougar Food Pantry's Zero Waste, Zero Hunger bag-building initiative, inquiring about volunteer opportunities. From the outset, his enthusiasm and proactive spirit stood out. Since that first event, David has become a reliable presence—volunteering at every Fresh Food Event and brings positive energy and warmth to each occasion. One memorable moment came during the Winter Bag Event in December. Despite having a prior commitment, David chose to cancel it so he could volunteer. His interactions with students were genuine and uplifting, and it was clear that they appreciated his presence and encouragement. His charisma, dependability, and passion for serving others make a lasting impression on everyone he meets. David's continued involvement has helped elevate the Cougar Food Pantry's mission, ensuring students receive the nourishment and support they need to succeed. Seeing his name on a volunteer confirmation is a joy for the entire team.