

LEARN HERE 2022 REAL HEROES

Battle Ground Public Schools



Prairie High School alumna and staff member Mandy Waugh has firsthand understanding of how a diverse yet unified community helps a school thrive. Mandy brought this idea to Prairie in 2018 via Inspire Week—a weeklong event aimed at building a strong school culture. Whether students are writing each other positive affirmations on sticky notes or attending one another’s extracurricular events, Inspire Week encourages students to uplift one another and build community outside of their usual social groups. Throughout Mandy’s time as both a Prairie student and staff member, relationships have been her continuous motivation. Mandy knows that when relationships are forged and students are valued for who they are, the entire school is better for it.



Passion and action are second nature to Terry Dotson, who spearheaded Battle Ground’s movement to pass a levy. After assembling community volunteers to make phone calls, hand out flyers, and dispel misconceptions, Terry’s efforts led to a \$115 million dollar levy passing for Battle Ground Public Schools. Prolific as it was, levy advocacy is only his most recent endeavor. Terry’s reverence for education and community service show up in numerous arenas. Whether he’s announcing at a basketball game or calling a neighbor to encourage votes, Terry’s ultimate goal is to give a voice to students and improve their experiences as much as possible.

Camas School District



For many, the transition to remote learning was filled with stress, but this transition happened to be Daniel Huld’s area of expertise. After ten years of working for online charter schools, Daniel became the principal at Camas Connect Academy—right when online learning became every student’s reality. Having dedicated his career to online education, Daniel brought energy and passion to Camas’ online learning program, emphasizing that with quality educators who are dedicated to their students, online learning doesn’t have to be a hurdle. Daniel gets energy from unique teaching circumstances that require him to meet the varying needs and backgrounds of his students. Regardless of the challenge at hand, Daniel approaches it as an opportunity for the whole school to grow.



Camas School District’s Parent Groups are dedicated to making the Camas community feel like one big family. As Helen Baller Elementary’s PTA President, Jessica Buck, says, their goal is to make school about more than just learning; the goal is to make school a community of welcomeness, from students to parents to teachers. Camas’ Parent Groups dedicate their time towards efforts that will enhance the school experience, whether that means a DJ hosting a dance party for the kids during lunch or breaking ground on a nature playground. Whatever the effort, it’s done to make school welcoming and fun for everybody involved.

Clark College



When the pandemic unearthed accessibility issues with technology, **Zach Lattin** used a lifetime’s worth of experience to problem solve. As a Blind individual who relies on screen reader technology himself, his job as an IT accessibility coordinator is an exercise in teaching others to do what he already does each day. Yet Zach brings more than IT assistance to Clark’s students; Zach allows students with disabilities to utilize technology so that they can reach their highest potentials in education—something that is increasingly significant as education and technology become intertwined. Accessible technology helped Zach thrive in higher education, so he sees his work as an opportunity to provide students with the same opportunities for success he had.



Rekah Strong believes that education is power, but this power emerges only when we account for diversity and provide equitable opportunities. As a Clark College trustee, Rekah does exactly this. An alumna herself, Rekah values Clark College’s dedication to assessing students’ individual needs and providing tools for success, whether that means offering childcare or implementing a food pantry. She also helped develop a Diversity Center at Clark, reflecting her core belief that education and equity must intersect. Rekah’s work aims to reinforce that nontraditional paths to education are valid and possible; there is no perfect chart that every student must follow to achieve educational goals. By elevating systematically marginalized voices, Rekah and her work can radically change students’ educational experiences.

Evergreen Public Schools



The district office sets the tone for the entire district in **Lori Strohl**’s experience; this is why, as administrative assistant, Lori dedicates herself to building relationships between Evergreen Public Schools and the community. Lori has been instrumental in supporting and communicating Evergreen’s “Strategic Plan”: Evergreen’s guiding principles for meeting student needs. Whether she’s answering parents’ phone calls or overseeing policy revisions, Lori’s motivation is the belief that families need to be heard and have their needs met. Prioritizing connection, Lori ensures the Superintendent and the Board are aware of the needs and values of the community. By doing this, she hopes to affirm that parents, students, and all community members have a voice in their school district.



Monica Stonier successfully brought passion and organization to Evergreen School District’s levy efforts. Having run many of her own campaigns for the Washington State House of Representatives, she knew what needed to be done to target messages and teach volunteers how to share information. Monica laid out a plan for herself and her volunteers and it paid off; Evergreen’s levy passed in a significant two-month turnaround. Monica’s decision to lead this effort was fueled by her deep ties to both education and public service; she sees a thriving public school system as essential for a thriving community. As a result, her approach to the levy was about more than just funding—it was about providing every student with the opportunities they need in order to thrive.

Hockinson School District



Beth Tugaw knows that school is best when it's fun, so she brings this to Hockinson High School's leadership class, where she empowers her students to create a connected school culture. Recently, Beth's students orchestrated a creative and safe "Pandemic Prom" as proof that community and unity are what makes school worth showing up for. Beth's success as a Leadership teacher derives from her belief that teaching is about empowering kids to teach themselves. She's observed that if you give students a chance to be leaders, they'll step up to the plate. Every year, Beth notices more and more students standing up for the kind of school they want. The belief that her students have the power to help each other thrive contributes to a fun, community-oriented school environment.



Community outreach and volunteer work are inherent to fire departments, which **Chief Scott Sorenson's** work in the Brush Prairie/Battle Ground area exemplifies. Founded by Hockinson community volunteers 75 years ago, Chief Sorenson ensures that Fire District 3 is involved in the community, especially within the school district, as a way of building relationships and trust. From helping out at field day to implementing a Fire Cadet program, Chief Sorenson and his team prove that they have the desire to learn about the citizens they serve. Fire District 3 is a pillar of the community. Because of this, Chief Sorenson affirms that working for a fire department is about relationships and serving the community.

La Center School District



Science educator **Paula Leach** teaches her students that following curiosity is a way of building a meaningful life. For Paula, this teaching is done by example. After graduating from WSU Vancouver with a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science, Paula knew she wanted to share her desire to learn about our earth. Sharing her passion has taken the form of developing La Center's first Ecology course, where students learn about current issues and develop their own research projects. She also organizes cleanup efforts in local natural spaces, demonstrating that curiosity and knowledge can lead to tangible action. Paula aims to help students develop inquisitive minds, seeing the topics that are relevant to their own lives and applying their knowledge to make the world a better place.



Having lived in La Center for fourteen years, **Melinda Mazna** sees the schools as pillars of the community. Coupled with her deeply rooted desire to give back, volunteering in the La Center School District has been Melinda's way of showing up for her community. Her motivation through it all is to be somebody kids can rely on, whether that means coaching track or helping out at field trips. Recent evidence of her desire to uplift students is a venture with her husband through their barbecue business, which gives local teenagers employment. Whatever the avenue and whatever challenges arise, Melinda continually finds ways to empower students, strengthening the fabric of the entire community along the way.

Ridgefield School District



Ted Beyer's expertise in strength and movement allows him to elevate Ridgefield High School's students to new heights. Ted's teaching philosophy revolves around fundamentals; he teaches kids how to use their bodies—tools they already possess—to become stronger individuals. In the weight room, Ted develops individualized plans for students so that they can reach their unique potential. When Ridgefield's student athletes come to Ted's weight room, he teaches strength as a means of developing what is in each athlete's individual control, rather than fixating on natural talent. Ted's bottom-up approach empowers students to identify what the strongest version of themselves looks like, and his expertise and passion give them the tools to achieve that.



Because iQ Credit Union was founded by teachers, Community Impact Manager **Evan Strandberg** puts education at the forefront of his team's community outreach efforts. As Community Impact Manager, Evan has developed a team of people who organize efforts to share resources with Ridgefield and their education system. Whether it's sponsoring an event at the school or organizing a new employee breakfast, Evan and his team bring empowerment to Ridgefield's community. For Evan, it's all about people helping people. From the beginning of his career with iQ Credit Union, he's been inspired by iQ's dedication to support education and empower educators and students. Through this inspiration, Evan and his team continually use iQ's resources to uplift and strengthen the community.

Vancouver Public Schools



Jeremy Berliss knows that being an effective leader means being hands-on. In his role as principal at the Jim Tangeman Center and GATE Program, Jeremy enacts a hands-on approach each day; to him, being hands-on has a lot to do with being visible. Jeremy's visibility amongst students entails being a part of their school days through the difficult times and the fun times, while his visibility amongst parents is achieved by hosting family nights and "Coffee With The Principal" talks. Jeremy knows that he is strongest as a leader when he is showing up for his students and staff, never asking them to do anything he wouldn't do himself. Even during the more demanding times, his dedication to involved relationships energizes his work.



After retiring from their busy careers, **Barry and Teresa Tweed** knew they wanted to volunteer in schools, but they didn't anticipate how much helping Truman Elementary's kindergarteners would mean to them. The Tweeds were asked to help out for two weeks in a kindergarten classroom but when the two weeks were up, they couldn't leave. The kindergarten classroom keeps them coming back because of all the growth they get to witness. Barry and Teresa get to see kindergarteners come in the fall with vast needs, and they get to witness them develop confidence by spring. Whether they are reading with kids or simply having conversations with them, knowing that they are a source of positivity and companionship keeps them inspired to return each school year.

Washington State School for the Blind



After spending most of her teaching career in music education, Jennifer Langley is bringing creative insights into her role as an administrator. Stepping into administration meant Jennifer could impart change as a leader, yet she knew she would miss the relationships with students the classroom provided. To bridge this gap, Jennifer centers her administrative approach around community, treating students as collaborators in their own education. Jennifer empowers kids to make good decisions for themselves rather than laying out a plan for them. Evidence of her philosophy's success lies in the nickname given to her by students: "mama Langley."



With extensive knowledge of and passion for photography, Gary Scott teaches visually impaired and blind students at the Washington State School for the Blind (WSSB) how to capture and share their lived experiences through the lens of a camera. Having a visual handicap himself, photography is powerful to Gary; it has always been a means of both transcending barriers and understanding the world in a closer, more nuanced way. These are the primary goals of his photography class. Gary's class allows blind and visually impaired students to explore new artistic methods, transferring the auditory and tactile world they experience to the visual medium of photography. No matter what the adversity, Gary always finds a way to create and share artistic opportunity.

Washington School for the Deaf



Dana Miles views self-advocacy as one of the most important skills one can possess, so she built a work experience program for Deaf teenagers at Washington School for the Deaf (WSD). From the time she began teaching, Dana realized that many Deaf individuals face significant barriers in navigating institutions, and that a work experience program would be instrumental in approaching these barriers. Dana's classes can provide students with employment, but her students also learn how to navigate the professional world, from resume building to advocating for workplace accessibility. Dana gets the opportunity to watch her students learn how to advocate for themselves while overcoming challenges and understanding their rights. To Dana, it's not only about providing life skills—it's about watching students grow, thrive, and learn who they are.



Cynthia Duncan understands the significance of community belonging. Her involvement with the Washington School for the Deaf (WSD) began shortly after she learned that her infant daughter was Deaf. Wishing to return the love and support she and her family received from WSD, Cynthia decided to foster even deeper connections by establishing a Parent Staff Organization (PSO) as a place of acceptance, inclusivity, representation and ownership in the WSD community. While leading a PSO comes with challenges, Cynthia remains motivated to show up for the community that showed up for her.

Washington State University Vancouver



For the past 11 years, Allison Coffin has been bringing passion for science, teaching, and research to WSU Vancouver's Neuroscience Program. Allison instills in her students not only a love of learning, but a love of knowledge itself—that is, collective effort to understand this world we all occupy. Allison facilitates inspiring classroom environments where the goal is not to learn facts, but to learn all that we don't know. By creating these environments, her students ask questions about the world, follow their curiosities, and perhaps most importantly, reach people. Teaching, to Allison, means uncovering how students and faculty can teach each other and learn together.



Michael Blankenship's years at Washington State University Vancouver (WSUV) were transformative, so he knew he had to find a way to share what he received with others. This opportunity came when he founded the LGBTQ+ Empowerment Scholarship with just \$21; in only five years, Michael transformed \$21 to \$30,000 and created the first officially endowed scholarship supporting LGBTQ+ students in the Washington State University system. Michael's motivation is fueled by a core belief that education is for everyone. His education from WSUV changed the way he saw himself and his identity as an LGBTQ+ individual, so he understands the importance of historically marginalized groups gaining empowerment through education. Michael's hope is that his scholarship will allow LGBTQ+ students to use education to confidently find their place in the world.

Washougal School District



Alice Yang's combined skills in architecture and childhood development bring a revolutionary art education program to Cape Horn-Skye elementary. Alice's teaching philosophy revolves around choice, as her experience in general education classrooms showed that kids thrive when they have tools for processing emotions. Rather than modeling one art project for the class to complete, Alice's students create their own artistic interpretations of a general theme, which yields higher engagement and excitement. Alice teaches students tools to synthesize and express their experiences through art, as she views art as a means of expression and processing information. Her philosophy gives Cape Horn-Skye Elementary's students a chance to use individualized mediums to tell their own stories as individuals.



For many students, school provides the only meals they can depend on each day. When COVID-19 shut schools down, restaurant owner Ben Jackson realized how many families would face hunger, so he took action. Upon schools' closures, Ben and his team provided lunches for families in the community. Although Ben spearheaded this effort, he humbly acknowledges that this was made possible by community support. From regulars at his restaurant who donated items to local organizations that donated money, Ben orchestrated an outreach program all of Washougal could take ownership in. As Ben says himself, whenever food is shared in a communal setting, it's never a bad time. By sharing his love for food with those who need it, Ben allows communal identity to flourish even during the most difficult times.



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The Learn Here Project is a special project of Identity Clark County, a nonprofit business leaders group that strives to make Clark County an even better place to land, live and learn for a lifetime. The Learn Here Project is made possible by Windermere Northwest Living, the Port of Vancouver USA, iQ Credit Union and Penrith Home Loans. More information is available at www.discoverclark.org/learn.