

Learn Here 2020 Real Heroes

Battle Ground Public Schools



If you want to train highly-capable students begin with highly-capable educators. Perhaps those with a military background and tremendous courage to make improvements wherever needs emerge. Like **Salina Machida** who served her country and now serves primary school students recognizing that she is preparing the next generation of leaders. In the COVID era, that means you use creative tools such as videos and hands-on activities so students can blend the physical and virtual environments to learn and grow together. She believes collaborative environments help every student thrive thereby reducing the achievement gap. Salina, we salute you.



When it comes to exposure to addictive substances, don't get **Kathy Deschner** started. For 20 years, she supported women across Clark County through the YWCA. Then tragedy struck very close to home. Kathy took to the classroom, the dinner table, and the neighborhood meeting a message that the best way to deal with drug abuse is to prevent any exposure in the first place. Through Prevent Together: Battle Ground Prevention Alliance, Kathy has mobilized health professionals to impress upon teens, parents, and guardians that prevention education is important to help youth make more healthy choices. Kathy's passion undoubtedly has saved lives and heartache for thousands in our community.

Camas School District



Five years ago, **Tami Westmoreland** and her four kids became proud Camas citizens. The stay-at-home mom restarted her career through the school food service program first as a dishwasher and now as food services coordinator. As an alert mom, Tami knew that the COVID pandemic was going to cost kids a daily source of meals... and kids can't learn on an empty stomach. So she enlisted hundreds of volunteers, and buses, and launched an innovative meal delivery program. First for 100 and eventually for 400 who rely on the district for meals. While conditions changed, Tami never lost focus on serving her community.



Left to Right: Brian Cavill, Matthew Chase, Jon Crowell, Adam Webber, Bruce Whitefield

Finite supplies of personal protective equipment met their match – **Infinite Resource**. The Camas-based team of high school STEM team mentors and coaches embraced the critical shortfall of PPE equipment

at the height of the COVID pandemic and sprung into action. They coordinated a manufacturing supply chain at students' homes using the district's 3-D printers, and a porch pick-up and delivery system. Some 20,000 face and eye shields were made and delivered by the student and mentor team, and distributed to 97 facilities including PeaceHealth, Legacy Salmon Creek, and OHSU to name a few. Students got real life experience while addressing a life-saving need.

Clark College



Anyone who has ever had a bad experience or made a bad decision should wish to know **Heather Adams**. As a student services leader, Heather has developed a proven record of demonstrating that grace in darker moments and necessary redirection can put students back on track. She emphasizes the value of how making good decisions now can lead to a stable, productive career and life. Her support services have continued seamlessly despite the pandemic through use of videoconference technology and her relentless compassion for each Clark College student.



We live in a generous community. For nearly a half century, individuals have been donating to the Clark College Foundation in support of future students and facility improvements. **Eric Merrill** sought to build on that legacy. The retired corporate executive of Waste Connections spearheaded a \$35M comprehensive campaign over five years supporting scholarships and ongoing endowments for keystone programs. The successful program makes Clark College one of the nation's five most successful community college foundations, having raised more than \$100M to supplement public funds and tuition, and making college education more attainable for thousands.

Evergreen Public Schools



Thousands of kids around the country rely on one and sometimes two meals a day through their school system. So what happens when a pandemic hits? **Jennifer Misfeldt** and **Hossein Akhtarkhvardi** figured out a way to continue delivering thousands of meals daily to kids throughout Evergreen Public Schools utilizing hundreds of bus routes and volunteers. Despite the challenges, their team adopted the motto "everything is figure-out-able." Jennifer and Hossein, we thank you from the bottom of our heart and the bottom of our stomach.



Henry Schuck became a household name in Vancouver when his company ZoomInfo became the region's most successful IPO ever in June 2020. However, Henry has been building his company and giving back for years. He created a Holiday Donation Drive competition where his employees could donate essential items to Evergreen Public Schools' Family and Community Resource Center which supports students in need. He then boldly proposed a financial match dollar for dollar with his many employees. The response was overwhelming. And Henry held to his promise resulting in nearly half a million dollars donated to the district.

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Hockinson School District



For four decades, **Shairn Villa** has served in many different capacities in the educational system. But what she's really developed is a finely-tuned ability to detect root causes for why students act the way they do. As a school psychologist, Shairn shapes students' mental and emotional health through active communication and building healthy relationships. As a pro-kid champion, she acknowledges, recognizes, and advocates for students regardless of their circumstances. When kids are valued and understood they excel both academically and socially.



The McBride family knows a thing or two about special touches. When it comes to honoring and appreciating teachers, **Betsy McBride** is always there with a birthday gift and a kind word. So when a pandemic hits and you can't do that in person, she finds another way – like blanketing the community in appreciation yard signs or hand-producing more than 500 masks for staff members. And here's another idea – for students who couldn't attend an in-person 8th grade promotion, she coordinated care packages to help celebrate. Who knows what she'll think of next?

International Air and Hospitality Academy



The International Air and Hospitality Academy's **Ann Dabbs** has built a reputation of straight talk among prospective students. If they have interest, she wants to work with them to assure they are setup for success and prepared to start their career training. The Portland native moved to Vancouver herself for lower housing cost and better schools. She finds tremendous satisfaction in helping young adults find their rewarding service and technical careers, in cuisine, airline services, renewable energy and railroad operations. Says Ann: "It's amazing what these careers have done to change students' long-term family trees."



Laura Bauman became exposed to the airline industry babysitting for a flight attendant. She decided early that she, too, wanted to become a flight attendant, realizing her desire with Jet Blue in California, staffing corporate flights and an air shuttle. Then, she fastened her seatbelt into a teaching role at the Academy, creating a fun classroom environment while preparing airline services students for takeoff. She wants her graduates to land positions amid the crowds – noting that one airline alone sorted through 100,000 applications one year to find their future flight attendants. She walks the talk, believing quality airline service begins in the classroom.

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La Center School District



Danielle Rivers (left) and **Erin Uskoski** (right) are a pair of district nurses who have a pulse on the health and well-being of students and staff at La Center. It goes far beyond scrapes, band-aids and dispensing medicine. This pair promotes a safe and healthy environment through such programs as Play Smart-Youth Heart Screening, a youth health program completing free EKGs on every student, and providing CPR training from EMTs. When COVID hit, they sprung into action as the COVID response team, preparing staff and students for shutdown, securing necessary protective equipment and preparing the facilities for reopening. What do they like best? Forming bonds with the students and staff. But they will always remember saving the life of a teenager who suffered cardiac arrest.



What does a four-time published author do in his retirement? He makes himself available through coaching and mentoring young people. “Go for life” is the motto of Vietnam veteran **Jim Cheskawich** who shares his rich life experiences with young people in La Center. Whether subbing in the classroom or coaching football on the field, Jim uses every minute with students to encourage personal and academic growth. A heart attack and two bouts with cancer have only provided more motivation for Jim to support the next generation of La Center students.

Ridgefield School District



Austin Biel has come up with a new formula to make math interesting to students in Ridgefield. It goes like this: numbers plus humor equals lasting learning. Austin understands from his days as a coach that deep learning requires a productive struggle, and a productive struggle can be made enjoyable even though it is challenging -- that’s what his favorite teachers did for him, and that’s what he is replicating now. Austin challenged himself this year to create online tutorials to assure that every one of his students leaves his class ready to perform and full of memories. The results are exponential.



Meredith Gudger-Raines has faith. Faith in our educational system as well as faith in every student deserving and benefiting from quality public education. That’s why the community pastor is quick to preach the importance of in-class learning and modern educational facilities. Meredith was an advocate of Ridgefield’s successful 2017 school bond and carries forward a powerful message for her fellow citizens as Ridgefield comes to grips with needed expansion to serve its fast-growing population.

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Vancouver Public Schools



With nearly a hundred spoken languages among the student population in Vancouver Public Schools, cultural diversity is an everyday experience. For **Tai Bainter**, it's second nature. The former PeaceCorp volunteer turned teacher now leads the district's dual language programs. She helps students carry the tradition of their family culture through nontraditional teaching methods like song and dance. Whether she's in Central America or in Central Vancouver, Tai brings her classroom to life in multiple languages.



When her son started kindergarten, **Leilani Casanova-Brunell** dropped in to a PTA meeting. Today, she finds herself PTA president. She believes that when everyone pitches in a little bit, something big is bound to happen. Like when she reached out to parents and staff to coordinate a small meal route for families in need during COVID and received an overwhelming response of support. By organizing an abundance of volunteers, Leilani is discovering new ways to support students and families, including no-cost parent-student activities, while positively supporting classroom learning.

Washougal School District



Brenda Hitchins was a noted chef in Clark County, Nevada – the home of Las Vegas -- but took a gamble on another Clark County, this one in Washington. She quickly found a new home at Washougal High School as a culinary teacher. She has built a vocational and career program by preparing emerging foodies for continuing education in the culinary arts while they receive practical experience serving made-to-order meals for fellow students. Now, her learning menu is expanding through videoconferencing to bring chefs from their kitchens around the country to her virtual classroom. Now

there's some food for thought.



You may have heard the adage, today's readers are tomorrow's leaders. **Susan Bennett** (right) and **Pat Suggs** (left) are betting backpacks that that's the case. As leaders of the General Federation of Women's Clubs of Camas-Washougal, Susan and Pat have adopted an incentives-based reading program supporting students in need. And that's not just one book, that's a backpack full. Providing this opportunity where young children's lives are enriched through reading, Susan and Pat believe the program sparks children and parents' imagination taking them on the journey of a lifetime.

Washington State School for the Blind



The Washington State School for the Blind is home for residential students who hail from all corners of the Pacific Northwest and Internationally. This requires additional efforts to care for their health and well-being as well as their classroom learning. And that's the work of **Robin Williams**, the lead campus nurse who treats all students with respect, admiration, and care. She has become the heartbeat of the on-campus health center and the driving force behind campus health management.



Kevin Danley is a professional chef with a heart for giving back. He found a home by volunteering his time teaching students how to cook using senses other than sight. Whether it's enjoying the aroma of vanilla or rolling out fresh pizza dough, students enjoy the sensory experience while learning life skills to facilitate independent living. When COVID hit, his popular classes took another dramatic shift and Kevin now produces videos from home where his unique training is being used now and will be for generations to come.

Washington State University Vancouver



Over the last few years, WSU Vancouver has made a deliberate effort to welcome a diverse range of people to their commuter campus and today that's more than 30 percent of their student population. Supporting that effort is **Dr. Obie Ford III** who came in with a commitment to make everyone feel like they belong on campus. He created a program course to do just that. In just two years, more than half of staff and faculty have completed that program. Through Obie's leadership, everyone is welcomed at WSU Vancouver.



A man who spent his life launching NASA rockets now helps engineering students launch their careers. **Cline Frasier** comes from a family with a legacy of giving to WSU. Starting with his grandparents, the families have four named scholarship funds, while Cline finds joy lending his years of expertise to the Vancouver Rocket Team. He says working with sharp, passionate students gives him faith for the future. How's that for an uplifting story?