CHEHALIS
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Students Learn &
Value Community
Service
FRIDAY
CONNECT
Jan. 19, 2024

Community Service in Our Mission

In the Chehalis School District, we want to prepare students for the journey ahead and that includes graduates feeling equipped to become responsible, contributing citizens. All seniors are required to complete 24 hours of community service and 12 hours of service to their school during their 4-year high school career in order to graduate. But Chehalis students are encouraged and enabled to do more.

"We're building it in as an expectation of 'this is what you do as a Bearcat.' Our community is so generous to our students that it's important for us to teach them that they need to give, too," said W.F. West Counselor Libby Rakevich.

At W.F. West, a bulletin board, morning announcements, monitors throughout the school and emails to students advertise community service opportunities. Students who join some service organizations through W.F. West may also have higher service requirements for graduation. For example, National Honor Society members need to complete 50 hours of community service to graduate with NHS honors. And some members of SkillsUSA actually get to plan and complete community service projects as a competition with other SkillsUSA schools. Examples include students who planned a blood drive last spring and those who held a Polar Express themed "parents day out" to benefit the Forgotten Children's Fund this Christmas season.

Last year, the Chehalis School Board designated an Honors Scholar Award for students who have completed 100 or more hours of community service: students with 100-199 hours receive a bronze award; 200-299 hours receive a silver award; 300-399 receive a gold award; and 400 or more hours receive platinum.

In the first year of the program, 20 of our 2023 graduates earned the Honors in Service award with a combined total of 5,282 hours of service. The student with the highest number of hours was Josh Patricio, who had a total of 632 hours. Rakevich said it was really interesting to see the different kinds of community service that W.F. West students participate in and learn a little more about them through these passions.

"We were hopeful of how the Honors in Service award would be received by students, and pleasantly surprised by the response we got," Rakevich said.

W.F. West SkillsUSA Community Service project to benefit Forgotten Children's Fund of Lewis County

SACAJAWEA GUILD

W.F. West students volunteering at the Santa Breakfast benefiting Mary Bridge Children's Hospital

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CMS 8th Graders Give Back

But community service isn't something that's only for high schoolers. At Chehalis Middle School, a school project actually takes students out of the school walls to help their community. Every Friday, a small group of Chehalis Middle School 8th graders visits the the Greater Chehalis Food Bank to help out for a few hours. It is a program that has been going on at the middle school for many years.

This year, about 16 students signed up to be part of the pool of food bank volunteers and Principal Chris Simpson, Assistant Principal Heidi Fagerness and Counselors Alicia Hill and Kyle State share the duty of being the staff member to accompany the students to the food bank each week.

"I think they feel a real sense of community and I think they appreciate being able to help people and knowing that what they do is helpful to people. It's important work and they really enjoy the people they work with," Simpson said.

Giving Without Thinking

Rakevich said she sometimes runs into students who didn't even know their good deeds could be counted as community service. For example, W.F. West Junior Allie Anderson, who sells her crocheted creations to the public. What started out as learning to crochet blankets as something to do during quarantine eventually became a full blown business with 120 blankets made in one and one-half years.

This fall, Anderson decided to sell crocheted pumpkins and give the proceeds to fellow Chehalis student and family friend Tylie Tobin, who is battling cancer. In just a few days, Anderson sold 70 sets of pumpkins (at 3 pumpkins per set, for a total of 210 pumpkins) and was simply blown away by the response.

"It was definitely a lot more than I expected. I wasn't expecting the community to support it as much as they did. It was a really cool thing," Anderson said.

Even cooler, Anderson just happened to mention her effort to Rakevich, who informed her that she could log her hours spent crocheting pumpkins as community service hours.

"I didn't realize it was a community service project. I was just thinking of it as giving money to Tylie because they're friends of ours. I didn't know I could get service hours for that at school," Anderson said.

After high school, Anderson hopes to become a teacher or a school counselor. Besides her crochet business, she said she is also involved in SkillsUSA where she is currently part of a team working on another community service project to fill backpacks with hygiene items and other necessities for homeless people.

High Schoolers, 2nd Graders Learn to Serve

Service isn't just something that Chehalis students take part in outside the classroom. Service is an ideal that is worked into every part of the school experience. One recent example is the partnership between the W.F. West Leadership Class and James Lintott Elementary 2nd Graders.

Lintott music teachers Katie Giuliani and Bonnie Bezon approached W.F. Leadership teachers Jennifer Taylor and Stacey Cummings about partnering on a Martin Luther King Jr. Day assembly. As part of preparations for the event, the high school leadership class spent a morning at James Lintott working with students on their parts for the assembly, reading with students and even playing on the playground.

But this wasn't just an opportunity for service for the high school students. The second graders were in charge of teaching the high schoolers the songs for the assembly. And the elementary students made hearts with words of encouragement for high school students that were hung in the W.F. West hallways last week. Giuliani said at first, the second graders were unsure what they could say to inspire high school students who are older than themselves but then they really got into the project, completing more than 200 hearts.

The assembly was originally planned for Jan. 12 and ended up being cancelled along with school that day. But this will not be the last time these students get together. Taylor said that the leadership class members had been wanting to visit the elementary schools for some time and plan to make these visits more frequently from now on.

I want you to dream big, because...
Dream big.
Be kind.
Do your best
Never Never give up.
Keep trying.
try New things.
Be yourself
Paiton
FAITH HOPE
I am smart
I love you, because...
you are your self
Rebel

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Chehalis School District

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