



SCHOOL NEWS

The La Center Way



La Center Elementary and Middle School students give back to their community by "Stuffing the Bus"! Middle School students collected over 5,349 pounds of food to donate to Share, one of the largest donations from a single school ever received. Share's Backpack Program works in partnership with La Center's Family/Community Resource Center to provide up to 5-10 pounds of food to students in need for the weekend.

Supporting families and preparing students

Family/Community Resource Center helps

La Center students and families have access to a powerful partnership that helps support families so students have what they need to come to school healthy and prepared to learn. The Family/Community Resource Center (FCRC) offers a series of programs, from welcome services for new families to job search and parenting support, as well as early childhood resources, and basic needs assistance. La Center's FCRC program was modeled after Vancouver School District's highly successful program, and has already grown to include 53 partnerships that support families. Studies show that children living in poverty are 25% more likely to miss three or more days of school per month. Across Clark County and the state of Washington, the percentage of families living at the poverty level is trending upward. In La Center, nearly 35% of students qualify for free and reduced lunch, an increase of five percent over the past five years.

Studies show that student success rates are higher when students are healthy, have higher attendance rates and are actively engaged in school and their community. Parent involvement in a child's education also helps boost success.

Continued on page 2 >

Inside this issue

- Message from the Superintendent .. 2
- Cupcake Wars 2
- Community Partnerships Extend Classroom into Local Watershed 3
- Getting to Know Lynn Cooke, 7th & 8th Grade Language Arts Teacher..... 4

High School stadium an amazing display of community support

Last fall, La Center High School's football team played its first-ever home game at the school, thanks to a grass roots effort involving a tremendous outpouring of community support to make this long-time dream a reality.

- » *More than \$240,000 in donations*
- » *Over 150 supporters*
- » *3,000 volunteer hours*

When voters voted not to raise taxes to build a new stadium, project organizers got creative. Volunteers stepped up to reduce the project's cost and the need to borrow money by doing much of the work themselves, including the installation of new lights, bleachers, goal posts and a scoreboard.

Continued on page 3 >

Message from the Superintendent

IT'S ALL ABOUT PARTNERSHIPS



Dear LaCenter Patrons: The start of a new calendar year always inspires goal setting and reflection, and as I look back and the first half of this school year, I'm filled with pride because of the

amazing collaboration within the La Center community.

I've said it before, but community partnerships are key to a successful school system. In this newsletter you will see several examples of the tremendous partnerships that make a difference for students and families in La Center. Last year, we launched the Family/Community Resource Center and in just one year it has grown to offer 53 programs for students and families. The FCRC is a tremendous resource to La Center students and families and several community agencies were instrumental in the creation of this powerful collaboration.

It was so rewarding to see the dream of many become a reality this fall as we celebrated the grand opening of our stadium. Of course, this dream would not have been possible if not for the tireless dedication of the La Center Education Foundation, their ongoing fundraising efforts, and local businesses and community members who not only donated money and materials, but volunteered their time and muscle to get the job done. It was truly a team effort and so gratifying for all involved.

The holiday season brought many examples of generosity from our successful Stuff the Bus program, which filled a school bus with non-perishables for the Clark County Food Bank, to the LaCenter Music Association's successful bazaar, which helps support music education in our district.

These are just a few examples of the inspiring ways that school and community partnerships support students and families to create a bright future for everyone.

Sincerely,
Dr. Mark Mansell, Superintendent

> Continued from page 1

Family/Community Resource Center



The La Center Church has transformed a room to support student's basic clothing needs. The Kidz Closet is open from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Monday-Thursday and Sundays from 10 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.

"The data shows that Community Schools (FCRCs) can make a huge impact in increased attendance, improved reading and math achievement, and decreased behavior issues, by helping to remove barriers to learning," said Jennifer Blechschmidt, Associate Principal, La Center Elementary. "We know that strong partnerships with families help students come to school ready to learn. By connecting families with resources that support employment, access to health and dental care, and other basic needs, we're helping prepare students for success in school."

"The FCRC aims to meet students needs by taking the 'whole child' approach," said Coordinator Mindi Payne. "We provide linkages and resources for children and families that help support teachers so they can focus on teaching kids. Additionally, by having various programs for parents and families, we can support families being more engaged in their child's development and learning."

For more information visit: lacenterschoolsfrc.squarespace.com

Cupcake Wars

Competition inspires young bakers

As a follow up to the wildly successful Iron Chef competition of the past two years, La Center Transition Students participated in a new culinary event called Cupcake Wars.

Students chose their own recipes looking for a winning flavor combination and made an ingredient list. The class shopped together, along with Lifeskills teacher Karla Karukes, to purchase the ingredients. Students practiced baking and cake decorating, experimenting with flavor combinations and techniques to make the perfect cupcake.

Cupcake flavors included chocolate peanut butter, Dr. Pepper, coffee, maple bacon, carrot cake, orange, and raspberry chocolate.

Cupcakes received a score between 1 and 5 for decorations, flavor, and texture. The winning cupcake was chocolate with peanut butter frosting with shaved chocolate for decorations.

Twelve students participated in the Cupcake Wars, taking the role of "baker" or "bakers assistant" on alternate days. The competition included four rounds with a final championship round. Winners names were engraved on a plaque to assure proper bragging rights and the top two received gift cards to La Center Market/Gorilla Grill.



1st place: chocolate with peanut butter frosting and shaved chocolate.

Community partnerships extend classroom into local watershed

La Center's Environmental Studies Class is the perfect example of schools and community partnering to support student learning with the added benefit of making a positive impact on the environment. La Center High School students learn about watershed awareness, waste reduction and land use through educational and fun environmentally focused projects, including a 4,000 square foot garden with a drip irrigation system, a salmon restoration program, and a watershed awareness program in local Brezee Creek.

"We believe that with knowledge comes the power for change."

—Rebecca Morris, Teacher

Students learn about sustainability, waste reduction, and soil and water pollution. With a wetlands located so near their school, students have frequent hands-on science lessons, such as monthly water quality tests and the collection of macroinvertebrates to better understand environmental conditions. The class partners with La Center Elementary fifth graders to share what they've learned and offer hands-on science in the watershed.

As part of the salmon restoration program, students collect data to share with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, which donates more than 1,000 Chum salmon eggs to the program each year. In addition, students also release 650-1000 Coho provided by NW Wild Fish Rescue and the Salmon in the Classroom Program. Students conduct water quality testing and monitoring as they learn about ecosystems, watersheds and salmon habitat and how each is impacted through water quality.

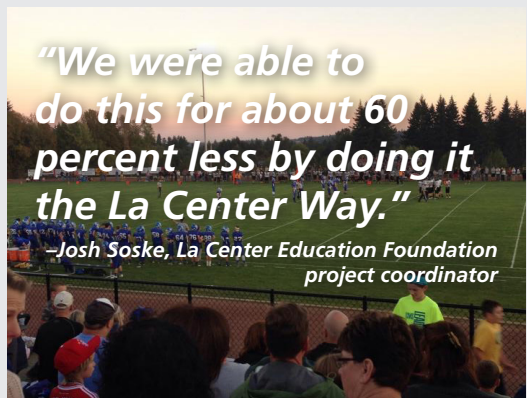
"The work done in the Environmental Studies Class with our fifth grade students serves to promote environmental awareness," said teacher Rebecca Morris. "We are educating ourselves and others about water quality and broader aspects of sustainability. We believe that with knowledge comes the power for change."

La Center High School is a level 3 certified Washington Green School for their commitment to environmental education, and is working to obtain level 4 certification. La Center Elementary has formed an LCE Green Team and is pursuing certification.



The project has received several grants and in-kind donations from various organizations including:

- The Pacific Northwest Clean Water Association
- Up to \$3,000 from the Water Resource Education to complete the rain barrel system and garden, and provide mentoring and supplies to conduct water quality tests and learn about the local watershed
- Fish First
- \$750 grant from Clark County Environmental Services to expand and enhance the edible garden zone within the ESC Garden.
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), which donates salmon eggs and provides class speakers on the topic of salmon restoration projects, the history of hatcheries and careers regarding habitat restoration
- NW Wild Fish Rescue annually supplies the Environmental Studies Class with 300-800 wild salmon and/or steelhead to release into Brezee Creek
- The Columbia Springs Environmental Education Center and Clark County Public Works supplies a tank and all necessary equipment to rear Coho salmon in the classroom for four months of the school year. These are released at the primary salmon restoration site and the secondary site at the mouth of Brezee Creek



> Continued from page 1

High School Stadium

La Center Education Foundation project coordinator Josh Soske said the district architect estimated the project could cost \$1.1 million to complete. "We were able to do this for about 60 percent less by doing it the La Center Way," said Soske. "The energy was there; it was an amazing experience. We had graduates from back to the 1950's stepping up to support this effort," he said.

Watch for phase two of the project, planned for summer of 2015, pending funds.

Thank you to the La Center Casinos Charitable Fund, the La Center School District and the City of La Center for partnering with the La Center Education Foundation. And kudos to the amazing volunteers, students, staff, community members and local businesses who made this all possible!



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Community Education

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Family & Community Resource Center

lacenterschoolsfrcr.squarespace.com/

Getting to know...Lynn Cooke 7th & 8th Grade Language Arts Teacher



After 15 years with the district, 7th and 8th grade Language Arts teacher Lynn Cooke says she still loves working with kids every day. "Not many jobs pay you to be with kids all day and experience their learning," says Lynn. "My job keeps me young, thinking and is always a challenge. I enjoy getting to know so many different people each year. It's always special when a student comes back to say 'hi' and tell me what they remember about my class and how they are doing."

In her daily interactions with students, Lynn works to show students that she cares while keeping them accountable for their learning. "I care about them as individuals, who each student is as a person, no matter what their interests are," she said. "I hope to impart the desire to learn and question things—always. Don't be afraid to ask questions, about any topic. Try new things, read new books, write about things new to you so you understand the world more. Education is important and can take you new places."

"I care about them as individuals, who each student is as a person, no matter what their interests are."

Of middle school students, Lynn says, "I accept they are trying to find their identity, will make mistakes and may push the limits. Middle school is that time when they need guidance, but want to have fun and still be a kid. They make me smile every day and it's so rewarding to see them mature from the beginning to the end of the year."

As the OSPI National Board Regional Coordinator for ESD 112 and one of 11 teachers in the district to earn National Board Certification, Lynn has helped many teachers earn certification as well. "The whole process is a reflection on teaching that requires teachers to be more aware and intentional in what they do," she said. "This is a powerful accomplishment for teachers. Having an NBCT in the classroom helps students reach higher standards today and in the future."