

KFCS Newsletter
Volume 1: Issue 5
Gap Fillers

The many school needs that are faced on a daily basis can be daunting. Some people may be tempted to throw in the towel and say, “Why keep up the fight? No one cares anyway.” If you are one of those who at times think this, I want to point out a very important fact: Klamath Falls does care. Here is the proof.

An all-call was sent to the community last year. Citizens were informed about the dire situation our schools face due to decreased resources and increased needs. People were challenged to think about how they could help. The response has been gratifying. Whether it is meeting the physical needs of families or filling in for lost or reduced program offerings, individuals and groups have stepped forward with gusto. The list of those who are willing to sacrifice for our young people is long.

Budget cuts have forced the district to reduce opportunities for students. Many people were not satisfied with complaining about this reduction of opportunity. Instead, they stepped forward to fill the gap. A good example is how the YMCA and AAU developed athletic offerings for junior high students so they can pursue their athletic interests despite school cutbacks.

Other groups such as Ross Ragland Theater, Klamath Outdoor Science School, the Audubon Society, the Klamath County Museums, Klamath Family Tae Kwon Do, and the Creativity Collective are also willing to lend their expertise and time to help young people expand their interests and talents.

Similarly, the Chamber of Commerce and many businesses in town are working with KFCS to provide valuable work experiences for students. Through the Credit for Proficiency Program, students now can learn important skills in areas of career interest. Likewise, Klamath Community College (KCC), Southern Oregon University (SOU) and Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT) have expanded KU post-secondary opportunities for high school and college credit.

Another valuable community partner in the school-to-work area is Junior Achievement. They provide training in the classroom to develop work skills and career awareness. The City of Klamath Falls has also been a key partner in this area as they have provided valuable internship opportunities for students.

There a great number of other city partners that have worked tirelessly for many years on behalf of young people to help them stay on track for graduation through attendance and character development. These groups include the Klamath Falls Police Department, the Youth Attendance Team, and our local court system. These groups could take a more punitive approach to youth development. Instead, they have worked hard to steer young people onto more productive paths.

OIT also has provided dental and nursing services in our schools through their college programs. A number of children have received important health care through these programs. Other groups in town provide essential services in helping families meet the physical needs of children. The Assistance League, Klamath Falls Friends Church, First United Methodist Church, Generation of Hope Ministries, the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, the Highland Branch Credit Union, and service organizations are a few volunteer groups that work diligently to help meet the physical needs of students.

Many people also help meet the emotional needs of our young. Some examples are Klamath County CARES, Citizens for Safe Schools, the Foster Grandparents Program, and Young Life.

Lastly, a great number of school volunteers are helping in school offices and classrooms. A good example of this is the SMART reading program that provides a large number of unpaid helpers for each site.

In summary, the community is stepping forward in numerous ways to support Klamath Falls' students during these challenging times. Let your favorite school know if you can help. They will be happy to assist you in finding an area of interest through which to contribute.

Interesting Facts:

- The superintendents of the City and County school districts are asking the County Commissioners to allocate some of the Secure Rural School dollars to help address some of the most pressing facility problems in the local schools. Currently there is more than \$90 million in this SRS account. The City and County school systems are asking for \$3 million from these funds to help with some short-term needs. If you would like to share your thoughts with the Commissioners on this topic, they can be reached at bocc@co.klamath.or.us. We will let you know when a public meeting is called to discuss this further with the Board of Commissioners.
- The YMCA is providing free swimming lessons to second-grade students at Mills and Fairview through a grant they obtained. The students love the chance to learn this essential skill.
- Every KFCS elementary school has a volunteer coordinator that is helping principals and teachers find helpers for many school projects.
- The district is examining our current grade-level configuration model (K-6, 7-8, and 9-12) to determine if another way of organizing students would better meet their needs. The goal is to have a recommendation for the school board by the end of the year for their consideration.
- If the KFCS District were at the national average for certified staff (teachers, counselors, and librarians) to student ratio, they would have 202 certified staff members. Instead, they have 155 making them 47 short of the national average.
- Junior Achievement is a valuable organization that provides many community volunteers to teach classroom units on finance, consumer education, goal setting, work skills and any number of other topics. If you are interested in volunteering to help out through this organization, contact Deanna Wilson, DWilson@ja-pdx.org.

Here is the direct link for the levy information on the KFCS web site:

http://www.edline.net/pages/klamathfalls/Resources/Operational_Levy