



Superintendent

*Inspiring Today's Students To Meet Tomorrow's Challenges*

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**Walk with a Hero**  
**Stearns Elementary kicks off new program**

Firefighters, Oregon Air Guard members, Oregon Tech coaches, county commissioners, health leaders and the Klamath Falls mayor came to Stearns Elementary for one reason: to walk and talk with its 330 students.

“We wanted to make sure you guys meet these heroes and learn how they got where they are and how they became a hero,” PE teacher Brandon Powell told a gym full of students Tuesday morning. “Everybody up here was sitting where you are at one point. They worked hard, had some struggles, but now they’re doing great things for our community.”

Powell and Oregon Tech senior Ben Schulz started the Walk with a Hero program on May 8. Each month Stearns will invite local heroes to walk with students and talk about how they set goals, worked toward them and achieved those goals. Students can nominate everyday heroes, too, such as family members or other people they know in the community. The program was funded by a grant from Cascade Health Alliance, which paid for T-shirts for all the students, as well as heart monitors.



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“We’re giving them aspirations, to see what they can do and become in their community,” said Klamath County Commissioner Derrick DeGroot. “I think that’s really important to instill in kids at a young age.”



“To get kids excited to think about what they might want to do when they grow up,” said Jill O’Donnell, Klamath County School Board member and retired teacher. “They look at different things people do for jobs and how they can be heroes in that way.”

“We love any community involvement we can do,” said Cpt. Beth Narramore, with Kingsley Field. “Being here for the kids, we’re hoping to set a good example for them.”

The students felt special getting a visit from local leaders.

“It was neat because they wanted to talk with us,” said Jordan Cornett, 10, a member of the Health Chasers Team who welcomed the heroes and helped lead the other students.

“It was an honor to have all our heroes here today,” said Natalia Herrera, 12, the president of the Health Chasers.

Some heroes liked that the goal-setting activity is tied to exercise.

“I like that they’re connecting the wellness efforts of the school with something that is also career related,” said Kelley Minty Morris, Klamath County Commissioner. “That’s a really brilliant way to get kids passionate about, not only their future, but their physical wellness.”

“Cascade Health Alliance is very excited about funding this new project. Everyone, kids and heroes alike, were having a wonderful time today,” said Margaret Fabrizio, with Cascade Health Alliance. “We hope that it will encourage all children and their families to join with us in creating a healthier Klamath Falls.”

“Just to be here to support them in their journey as far as health and wellness,” is the reason Dr. Glenn Gailis, with the Sky Lakes Wellness Center. “Staying active for the rest of their life, I hope.”

“We want to eat healthy, we want to get exercise in,” said Natalia. “And why not exercise? Exercise is a fun thing to do.”

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**A special thank you to all the heroes who attended the Walk with a Hero kick-off:**

- Derrick DeGroot – Klamath County Commissioner
- Kelley Minty Morris – Klamath County Commissioner
- Jill O'Donnell – Klamath County School Board member
- Carol Westfall – Klamath Falls Mayor
- Erica Veth – Dean of Online Education at Oregon Tech
- Dr. Glenn Gailis – Sky Lakes Wellness Center
- Margaret Fabrizio – Cascade Health Alliance
- Justin Parnell – Oregon Tech basketball coach
- Meredith Scott – Oregon Tech women's basketball coach
- Jack Kegg – Oregon Tech cross country and track and field coach
- Cpt. Beth Narramore – 173<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Wing, Kingsley Field
- SMSgt. Pat Burkhart – 173<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Wing, Kingsley Field
- Staff Sgt. Alicia Mossett – 173<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Wing, Kingsley Field
- MSgt. Tony Clark – 173<sup>rd</sup> Fighter Wing, Kingsley Field
- Rhannon Kerr – Blue Zones Project Klamath Falls
- Klamath County Fire District No. 1 – three participants

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## Stearns Elementary Accessible Track Project

The Walk with a Hero program is also a way to fundraise for a new track at Stearns Elementary. PE teacher Brandon Powell has plans to build track everyone can use at Stearns Elementary, including student with disabilities.

“Our track is just grass,” said Natalia Herrera, 12, president of the Stearns Health Chasers Team. “We really want to raise money to make this amazing track. We want people to come here with their kids and have fun, running on the track.”

If you would like to donate to the Stearns Track project, contact Powell at [powellb@kcsd.k12.or.us](mailto:powellb@kcsd.k12.or.us). Stearns is holding a bottle drive now. To donate, you can pick up bags at Stearns Elementary and drop off donations at any time during school hours. Powell will also pick up bottles. Or you can donate to the Bottle Drop account at [this link](#).



***This is a joint press release from the Klamath County School District and Cascade Health Alliance.***

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