

Former Hough student bestows gift of kindergarten

Paul Christensen grew up in the Hough neighborhood, and that's where his heart remains. In 1992 he founded the Hough Foundation to help the children of Hough Elementary, his former elementary school. He supported a volunteer center at the school and construction of the Hough Pool, which opened in 1997. This year, 108 schools in Washington received state grants to run full-day kindergarten programs. Only two schools in Vancouver—Fruit Valley and Peter S. Ogden—made the list, but Christensen was determined that Hough students should have the same opportunity. His generous contribution allowed Hough to open a full-day kindergarten class this year.

"He has a huge heart, and he works hard to provide for students and kids in the Hough neighborhood opportunities that they wouldn't be able to participate in," said Principal Sean McMillan.

"My heart *is* with kids, kids are our future. I can think of nothing more exciting than having kids graduate from Hough excited about their education, and I truly believe that starts in kindergarten or even before," stated Christensen.

"He is a great contributor to public education and a great member of society," said Board member Dale Rice as he presented Christensen with a framed certificate of appreciation.

"Probably what got me going on the right path, I was the first person ever to be paddled at Hough School," Christensen admitted humbly.

"There is no more important program than the one you are helping us start at Hough," said Board President Mari Greves.

High school students receive national honors

2008 National Merit Semifinalists

Five students from Southwest Washington made the list of 2008 National Merit Semifinalists. Four of the five are from Vancouver School District. The Board recognized Emily Cabanatuan and Colleen Cotter from Columbia River, Craig Wiley from Hudson's Bay, and Brian Tang from Skyview. "These students are among the top one percent of the 1.4 million students who took the PSAT last year," said Mike Lane, associate principal at Columbia River.

These students all have varied interests and participate in numerous activities. Tang described his interests as interdisciplinary—environmentalist and economist. Last year, Wiley went on a mission trip to Africa, and he hopes to do more to bring clean water and improve living conditions in African villages. Cabanatuan is active with Amnesty International and is a cross-country runner. Cotter missed the board meeting so she could prepare for Columbia River's soccer game against Camas. Cotter is co-captain of the team and plays center defense. (Camas 1, Columbia River 0, but the CR coach said the girls were "Awesome!")

2007-2008 National Hispanic Recognition

Sean Davila, a senior at Hudson's Bay High School, was named a scholar in the College Board 2007-2008 National Hispanic Recognition Program. His award was based on his PSAT scores and GPA. He hopes to graduate in the top 25 of his class and attend Brigham Young University.

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2008 National Achievement Scholarship Semifinalist

Amanda Hall, a senior at Vancouver School of Arts and Academics, was named a Semifinalist in the 2008 National Achievement Scholarship Program. Hall wants to major in Japanese and hopes to become a diplomat or teach English in Japan.

“Isn’t it an honor that Vancouver School District has these students,” commented Board member Ed Rankin, who said he would like to see a photo of these six students on the front page of *The Columbian* newspaper. “It would be very good news to the community that we are doing the right things for our students, and they take advantage of it.”

Student board reps are articulate

In their first presentations to the Board, student board representatives shared information about themselves—their school activities, their interests and talents. Full IB student Alicia Lester, Columbia River, framed her speech around “Don’t I wish I was a kid again.” Ivan Vukovic, Hudson’s Bay spoke of his passion for helping people and giving back to the community. Actress and singer Sarah Faulkner promoted her school’s first fall show, “Ash Girl,” opening next month at Vancouver School of Arts and Academics. Student body president Jake Neblock said he wants to introduce sports at Lewis and Clark. Alex Catchings framed his busy senior schedule at Skyview High School as “My life as a comedy.”

Ashley Sale, Fort Vancouver, wants to be a medical social worker. In the wake of negative news coverage about Fort, she spoke up in support of her school. “I am glad these students are being held accountable,” she said, in reference to the students who were expelled following the incident on Sept. 27. “I feel extremely safe. We are good kids in a safe environment, and this will be known.” She hopes to develop a mediation club and is working with other students to organize a Peace/Unity Rally on the school grounds on Wednesday, Oct. 10, at 7-7:30 p.m. “I view this crisis as an opportunity to make a difference in the school community,” Sale stated. She quoted Mahatma Gandhi: “An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind.”

President Greves congratulated the 2007-2008 student board reps, saying, “For our first reports of the school year, you have all done a fabulous job. This is the most articulate reporting ever and we look forward to your subsequent reports.”

Clothes Closet operates with help of VSD Foundation

The Clothes Closet will continue to provide clothing for children in need as well as retail work experience for students thanks to support by the Vancouver School District Foundation. In a memorandum of understanding signed by Foundation Board President Mark Matthias, and School Board President Mari Greves, the Foundation affirmed it would support the Clothes Closet in these ways:

- Clothing vouchers — Vouchers provided by principals to families in need of clothing will be continued and expanded.
- Rent support — Gross revenues from sales at the Clothes Closet are used to pay rent and operating expenses, however the Foundation agreed to cover expenses in the event of a shortfall.
- Student worker salaries — To keep the Clothes Closet operating six days per week, the Foundation agreed to cover hourly labor costs for students on Saturdays and non-student attendance days.
- Staff salary — Based on school district cuts in staffing, the Foundation agreed to cover salary and benefit costs for one staff assistant position.

The Clothes Closet will continue to operate at the Park Hill Shopping Center at 6405 E. Mill Plain Boulevard. The board approved a one-year extension of the commercial lease agreement for the property. “Steve and Marilyn Memovich have been very good landlords. They have extended the year at no additional costs. It’s been a very good partnership,” said Mark Stoker, who served on the VSD Foundation board prior to becoming a school board member.

Other items—

- Board member Edri Geiger commented that some students being released from Vancouver School District are looking for different kinds of educational opportunities, such as Internet classes and programs similar to Vancouver Home Connection. “We need to market and develop these areas as well,” she said.
- The Public Information Office is changing its name to Communications Office to reflect internal and two-way communications. Submit nominations for the Employee Excellence Award on the district website.

