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Middle schoolers raise funds for homeless teens

Eighth grade students from Kraxberger Middle School raised \$1,700 to support homeless youths by hosting a talent show and auction on January 8. The funds raised will benefit P:EAR and Springwater Transitional Living.

Macie Kingsley’s 8th grade language arts class organized the event as part of their study of homelessness. After learning Clackamas County has more than 2,000 homeless people, they wanted to help.

“We call ourselves Hope Nation because we believe hope can grow throughout a nation,” said student Hannah Shaw. “We might be 12, 13, or 14, but we can do something important in our community.”

Students performed songs, tap dancing, guitar, and piano. Portland Chamber Music also performed. In addition, the group auctioned off 14 pieces of art created by homeless teens. Partners supporting the event included JJ Jump, Jamba Juice, Stanley’s corner, P:EAR, Nana’s Treasures, and Panera Bread.

“This was a testament to what kids — given the freedom, trust, and guidance of an open-minded educator — can collectively do to positively change our world,” said teacher Erinn Emmons.

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Gladstone High graduation rate up 5 percent

In 2015, Gladstone High School surpassed the state graduation rate by 12.8 percent, with nearly 87% of students graduating in four years. The school’s graduation rate was 5 percent higher than the previous year.

“We want each student to be college or career ready when they leave high school,” said Interim Principal Nancy Bailey. “We will continue to try new support strategies to get every student across the finish line.”

Gladstone High has a strong success rate with Latino/Hispanic students, with over 87 percent graduating on time. That tops the state average by nearly 20 percent.

Students in poverty also do better in Gladstone, with over 81 percent graduating on time, more than 15 percent above the state average.

“When kids struggle, it’s about more than academics,” said Vice Principal Patti Alexander. “Each student has unique issues, from depression, anxiety, or poverty to learning disabilities.”

To raise the graduation rate, each school is strategically focused on more than academics. Kindergarten classes work on social-emotional skills. Elementary students learn self-regulation. Middle school students learn organization and collaboration. High school clubs connect students with mentors and peers.

“We are giving students strategies to combat stress, build determination, and focus persistently on striving toward a goal,” said Bailey. “All these things build a foundation for graduation success.”