

Vice principal honored as Mental Health Hero

Kraxberger Middle School Vice Principal Jeff Waters is one of the 2019 Mental Health Heroes celebrated by the Keep Oregon Well campaign.

Waters spent last summer building and planning the new Student Wellness Center at Kraxberger Middle School. The soothing oasis offers students 15-minute appointments to practice self-calming and de-escalate strong emotions. In the first year of the program there have been 1,300 student visits, and the school has seen a decrease in discipline referrals and suspensions.

“Kids today are experiencing a greater degree of anxiety and stress,” said Waters. “Mental health means learning how to take care of yourself, and we need to give students the strategies to do that.”

Waters will be recognized at Trillium’s gala on May 18 and featured in the Keep Oregon Well social media campaign on May 28.

PHOTO: Kraxberger Middle School Vice Principal Jeff Waters was honored for his work to develop a wellness center for students.

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Neighbor donates freezers to Gladstone Food Pantry

Michelle Chao was shopping at Hamilton’s Appliance when she overheard volunteer Bill Kemnitzer asking about a freezer purchase for the Gladstone Food Pantry. After talking with him about the pantry’s needs, she made a snap decision to buy two freezers and donate them to the organization.

“Michelle told us there was a time in her life when she had a setback and needed extra support. Now that she's successfully established herself, it's her mission to give back,” said Food Pantry Coordinator Alex Van Pelt.

“We are so thankful for this incredible donation. Our existing freezers were small and old,” she added. “The two new units are not only more energy efficient, but greatly increase our storage capacity so we can provide more meat and frozen foods to the families we serve.”

The Gladstone Food Pantry partners with the Oregon Food Bank to provide free groceries to any family in need. Located on the north side of the Gladstone High School campus off Nelson Lane, it is open Thursdays from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to noon.

PHOTO: Local attorney and real estate agent Michelle Chao donated two new freezers to the Gladstone Food Pantry.

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Gladstone students improve watershed

Fifth graders from John Wetten Elementary learned about watershed restoration through a service-learning project organized by the Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership [LCREP].

“LCREP provided every fifth grade class with hands-on science instruction this school year,” said fifth grade team leader Cathy Mitchell. “They learned about native and invasive plants, the food chain, birds of Oregon, and more.

On Earth Day, students improved the watershed by removing invasive ivy in Mary S. Young State Park. They used guide books to identify birds like the hairy woodpecker, song sparrow, and black-capped chickadee.

“This partnership allowed students to experience nature in new ways, helping them understand the importance of protecting our natural resources and habitats while appreciating the beauty that surrounds us,” said Mitchell.

PHOTO: John Wetten fifth graders tackled a watershed improvement project, pulling invasive ivy in Mary S. Young State Park.

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Bike rodeo offers safety tips, helmets

The Gladstone Police Department plans a free bike rodeo to teach children bicycle safety skills, hand signals, and obeying traffic control signs. Free bike helmets will be provided to those who need them.

The event runs from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, May 8 under the covered play area at John Wetten Elementary, 250 E. Exeter Street in Gladstone. Children should bring their bikes to try the obstacle course.

Partners in the event include the Gladstone Kiwanis Club, and the Gladstone High School Key Club.

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