

Students rally for Dream Act at Oregon Capitol

LAUREN HERNANDEZ
SALEM STATESMAN JOURNAL
USA TODAY NETWORK

More than a hundred Salem-Keizer high school students rallied Dec. 6 at the Oregon State Capitol and demanded Congress pass a Dream Act by the end of the year.

Students stood on the Capitol steps and shouted "What do we want?" "Dream Act!" "When do we want it?" "Now." "If we don't get it?" "Shut it down."

The rally was part of a nationwide effort organized by United We Dream, a national immigrant youth-led organization working to support undocumented immigrants.

The rally comes more than three months after President Donald Trump announced he would phase out former President Barack Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA. The program allows roughly 11,280 Oregon recipients to live, study and work in the United States, or serve in the military, without fear of being deported.

The Trump administration is giving Congress six months to determine a legislative fix for the program, which U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions called an "unconstitutional exercise of authority by the executive branch."

That time frame is dwindling as the March 5 deadline approaches, which has some undocumented Oregonians worried about their future in the United States.

DACA recipients said these rallies



Salem-Keizer students rally at the State Capitol in support of the Dream Act.

LAUREN HERNANDEZ/STATESMAN JOURNAL

are part of a last-ditch effort to sway members of Congress toward reinstating a Dream Act, which they hope would provide a path to citizenship. Their hope is for Congress to pass the act by the end of December.

"The sense of urgency is very real for any DACA recipients, as some are falling off this program on a daily basis," said Oregon DACA Coalition representative Leonardo Reyes. "That reinforces the sense of needing to take action and reaching a solution as soon as possible."

Students standing on the Capitol steps pulled out their cellphones and called Oregon's Republican U.S. Rep. Greg Walden's office in Washington, D.C., in

hope of personally demanding that a Dream Act be enacted by the end of the year.

Organizers focused their efforts on Walden because they said he has yet to publicly support passing a Dream Act that provides a path to citizenship.

A number of Oregon Democrats have publicly criticized the decision to rescind the program, including: U.S. Sens. Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden, U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader, Oregon House Speaker Tina Kotek, Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum, Gov. Kate Brown, House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson, state Reps. Diego Hernandez and Teresa Alonso Leon, and Senate President Peter

Courtney.

After Trump rescinded DACA in September, Walden released a statement saying he appreciated the president's understanding that Congress must address illegal immigration.

Gabriela Garcia, 24, of Hood River, is one of Walden's 2nd District constituents.

She was born in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico and came to the United States when she was 6 years old. She has been a DACA recipient for four years.

"It's scary because of the fact deportation can come at any time," Garcia said. "I have until next October until I lose DACA status, so I'm fighting for a clean Dream Act."

Garcia joined the group in calling Walden's office, just as hundreds of other students did in November after walking out of Salem-Keizer schools and rallying on the capitol steps.

Rep. Diego Hernandez, D-Portland, told the group of students that he and a number of his colleagues are doing everything in their power to make undocumented immigrants and DACA recipients in Oregon feel safe.

DACA recipients and immigrant youth from Causa Oregon, immigrant rights organization, Latinos Unidos Siempre, a youth Latino leadership organization, and the Oregon DACA Coalition hosted the rally.

Email Lauren Hernandez at lehernandez@statesmanjournal.com, call 503-399-6743 or follow on Twitter @LaurenPorFavor

Teen

Continued from Page 1A

and assisted by their friends and family. "I've not seen a family who, amidst such a sudden and devastating loss, has been able to turn it into loving and caring and serving so quickly and so profoundly," said the church's pastor, Leah Stolte-Doerfler.

At the meal, from her place inside a framed picture, Elizabeth looked into the crowd, flashing her beautiful dark eyes and winning smile for more than just her photographer, it seemed. She would've loved attending, said her dad. After all, together they'd made a pact to "give back" just weeks before her death.

A beautiful soul

Anthony and Kristan's oldest child, Elizabeth, was born Sept. 12, 1999. Her dad's family hails from Montana; her mother's - the Philippi clan - from Stayton, where her grandfather ran an auto dealership. The couple met in eighth grade, dated in high school and married after college.

Anthony studied history and plants at Oregon State University, becoming a nurseryman. Kristan majored in accounting at Western Oregon University and took a job with BrucePac Meat Product Designers, where she is now the chief financial officer.

Together, the couple also founded their own business, Sunflower Farms, in the Cascade foothills. Kristan said she remembers those early days, working at the farm's new retail store while Elizabeth, just a baby, twirled and jumped in a bouncy seat nearby.

From the time she was tiny, their daughter could listen to a song on the radio once and easily recall it. One time, when Elizabeth was 1, Kristan thought she recognized what her daughter was singing in the back seat.

"It remember thinking, 'Is she singing Kenny Chesney?' she said. "I turned up the radio, and sure enough, she was!"

Soon enough, Elizabeth was joined by a sister, Abbie, now a 16-year-old junior at Silverton High.

As the girls got older, the Hokes, employed a series of babysitters, each carefully chosen to build up the girls. Teachers, dance instructors, babysitters - all contributed to their growth over the years, Kristan said.

One of them, Megan Campbell, is now an adviser on Elizabeth's memorial trust. "For nearly 10 years, Elizabeth was

my right-hand girl, my co-pilot, my sister and my friend. Now she is my guardian angel," Campbell said.

The Hoke girls attended Victor Point School and, from her earliest years, Elizabeth "didn't have a clique," said her dad. "She would talk to anyone."

She loved to read, dance, sing and draw. In high school, she discovered a love for science, especially genetics and the human body. She worked with plants on the farm, showed sheep for FFA, studied Spanish and graduated valedictorian last June. She was also a member of St. Paul's Catholic Church.

"She was shy, sweet and wickedly smart," said Silverton High science teacher Alison Stolfus. "She grew from a shy young girl to a vibrant and confident young woman."

A place in this world

Elizabeth's first big trip with her dad came when she was only 6. He brought her along to New York City, where she tolerated the red-eye flight and whirlwind sight-seeing beautifully, he recalled.

That was the beginning of many adventures. Anthony and Kristan worked hard, and they liked to play hard with their family too. Along with the more common destination of Disneyland, Elizabeth also visited Spain, Italy and Mexico.

In 2014, Anthony quit the consulting side of his nursery business, cutting back on business trips. Knowing what he does now, that was "the best decision of my life," he said.

Almost immediately, he and Elizabeth - travel enthusiasts by now - began planning a high school graduation trip. They finally settled on Southeast Asia, because they were seeking a grand adventure, and neither spoke the languages there.

In Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand, they sought to disconnect from the stresses of daily life. For a month, they started each morning by locking their cell phones in their hotel room to avoid spending precious moments messaging or using social media.

"Be here now," was their motto; it's now reflected in a collection of handmade signs on sale at Sunflower Farms' retail store 12595 Sunnyview Road. All proceeds from their sales go to the trust.

Neither Anthony nor Kristan had used Facebook before this fall. They didn't need to live in the public eye, nor did they want to. Thus, much of the community was surprised by the breadth of their adventures at Elizabeth's celebration of life service at the Oregon Garden

on Sept. 29.

The lessons father and daughter learned in Southeast Asia might've remained private too, if it weren't for the tragedy that broke the Hokes' life open to their community.

Changed forever

Promising each other to "live gratefully" and "give back more," Anthony and Elizabeth flew home to Oregon at summer's end.

The 17-year-old was signed up to attend her mother's alma mater and study biology. She wanted to help kids with medical problems and was excited to live in Monmouth.

"But she loved Silverton, and she was already talking about how she was going to come back and work here when she graduated," Anthony said.

On Sept. 12, she turned 18 and got ready for classes to begin. Her new college town was her destination when she left her parents' company in her Volvo on the evening of Friday, Sept. 22.

At 7:50 p.m., Polk County deputies responded to a collision between Elizabeth's Volvo and an Acura driven by a 24-year-old Dallas resident, north of Monmouth. Police later determined that the other driver had been speeding. Both drivers died instantly.

Words will never describe the shock the Hokes felt. They rushed to the crash scene, where the night was dark but lit by scores of emergency vehicle lights. It was surreal. How could their sweet, vibrant girl - just 10 days past her 18th birthday - be gone?

Suddenly a father, mother and sister found themselves thrust into mourning, wondering how to take their next breaths.

Just four months earlier, Kristan's dad had died. Anthony's dad died when he was 10, and the couple had been at the bedsides of many other dying family members. But this was a level of pain they'd never felt before.

"We've been together for a long time, but we knew right away that this was something beyond our resources," Anthony said. "It was very clear that life had forever changed."

A new calling

By 8 a.m. the morning after the crash, friends were at the Hokes' house, surrounding them with the best consolation they could offer - tears, hugs, meals, and, simply, company.

One of them was Carson Lord, Anthony's friend and fishing partner for the last 14 years. Both nursery owners, the

men had even traveled together. Anthony quickly shared his vision of creating a trust to honor Elizabeth and give back to the community she loved so much.

People wanted to donate - if Anthony and Kristan hadn't known the lengths to which their community would go for them before, they did now.

They appointed three trustees: Lord, Eric Jamieson and Patrick Lailey, and four advisors to oversee the new nonprofit. Instead of serving on the board themselves, they stepped back, opting to focus on fundraising, grieving and raising their daughter, Abbie.

"The outpouring of kindness from this community in the midst of this tragedy was phenomenal," Lord said. "Our hope is that the trust can mirror it. We hope it will become a great asset to our community, a source to lean on when help is needed. We want to fill the niches where needs go unmet."

Crafted to match Elizabeth's talents and interests, the trust's 10 scholarships will be awarded to students with aptitudes or interests in music, dance, science, the arts, foreign language, and sports, participation in FFA, accomplishment as a valedictorian, and having "gratitude for life" or special needs. Purposely, the Hokes haven't attached the scholarships to students' college plans or skills, but rather their "good choices" or "passion for life," Anthony said.

The Salem Foundation is administering the scholarships for the trust; donations can be made online at <https://ehoketrust.org>.

The trust will also make direct community grants, such those that funded the Thanksgiving meal and bought books for Silverton Middle School and Victor Point. Donations toward these efforts can be made at Citizens Bank in Silverton.

"Elizabeth was an incredible kid, happy, bright and generous; we won't forget that, and eventually I hope we also remember her as the spark that lit a thousand acts of kindness," Lord said.

Now the Hokes plan to focus on loving each other, grieving however they need to, and looking for what brings real joy.

"Things are different now," Kristan said. "A lot of things don't matter anymore."

For them, this tragedy has burned away the joy in just about everything. Everything, that is, except the joy in giving to others, especially those who've undergone pain themselves.

"There is no wrong way to grieve - other than not to grieve at all," Stolte-Doerfler said. "It is inspiring to watch the Hokes transform their situation into a blessing to the community."



CROWN MEMORIAL CENTERS CREMATION & BURIAL

A New Tradition™

LOW COST CREMATION & BURIAL

Simple Cremation \$595

NO Hidden Costs

<p>SALEM 412 Lancaster Drive NE (503) 581-6265</p> <p>PORTLAND 832 NE Broadway (503) 783-3393</p> <p>EASTSIDE 1433 SE 122nd Ave (503) 783-6865</p>	<p>TUALATIN 8970 SW Tualatin Sherwood Rd (503) 885-7800</p> <p>TIGARD 12995 SW Pacific Hwy (503) 783-6869</p> <p>MILWAUKIE 17064 SE McLoughlin Blvd (503) 653-7076</p>
---	---

Privately owned cremation facility.
A Family Owned Oregon Business.

www.ANewTradition.com

Your friendly local dentist ...

Michael Kim, DDS

Now taking
New Patients!



Enter for our
monthly
Kindle
drawing at each
appointment



Brittney, RDH



Morgan, RDH

We accept most insurance!

503-873-3530

410 Oak St, Silverton, OR, 97381 | kimsilvertonordentist.com