

Schools Committee sponsors tech gathering at Stephens Creek Crossing

By Jack Rubinger
The Southwest Portland Post

The first SWNI Schools Committee meeting of the 2017/2018 school year was kicked off by brainstorming ideas for tools each participant may bring along to get things accomplished.

One exciting schools committee project is the Tech Equity Project that began in 2015. With Office of Neighborhood Involvement small grants, the committee has connected resources with schools, families, individual students and neighbors who do not have students in schools.

A Resource-Full Gathering is scheduled for Oct. 19, at Stephens Creek Crossing, 6719 SW 26th Ave. starting at 6:30 p.m.

This gathering is intended to integrate input from recent community conversations with technology related enrichment activities and partner connections.

Parents, neighbors, school leaders, teachers and residents of Stephens Creek Crossing may attend, share a free catered meal and get to know each other.

Whether it is about connections to high speed internet, online safety or coding discussions and after school access, the Schools Committee and partners have pulled together to engage and enrich students and parents who are willing to gather and discuss technology related

education support.

Partners include Neighborhood House, Multnomah County Library, Portland Jewish Academy, Free Geek and Home Forward.

Maripat Hensel, SWNI Schools Committee Chair, is prepared for anything the Schools Committee may want to embrace.

Hensel remembers details, faces, personalities, anecdotes, and stories that make committee goals seem fun and exciting.

Her tools from the session brainstorming – a knife and spoon. Her key for Schools Committee outreach? Active listening.

The committee's purpose is to promote the best possible schools for all students in Southwest Portland through strong neighborhood involvement.

The committee has worked for nearly 12 years and has an Annual Action Plan. This written plan is a roadmap for the year and available to share at a moment's notice.

While neighbors may not be as well versed with this committee as they may be with public safety, land use and transportation, regular members of the committee are actively working with school administrators and teachers to facilitate community involvement projects.

Members also meet with community partners, including representatives of the Multnomah County Library, SUN School Programs and City of Portland

bureaus to integrate outreach and education efforts.

This committee strives to increase visibility for what they do, who they help and how they can be reached. The idea is to enhance communications between public and private schools and neighborhoods.

Members address issues such as school boundaries, the role of school property as open space, school closures, sale of school properties, school events and partnerships with neighborhood associations and other organizations.

SWNI empowers citizen action to improve and maintain the livability of Southwest neighborhoods. The schools committee is a standing committee of Southwest Neighborhoods which is a coalition of 17 neighborhood associations.

Hensel carries a background in business and experience with non-profits to her leadership role with the schools committee.

Committee members and volunteers feel her passion and excitement about making things happen for students in the community.

Hensel continues to work toward getting the community to know each other better by maintaining consistent touch points.

This past summer, conversations



Maripat Hensel is chair of the SWNI Schools Committee. (Post photo by Jack Rubinger)

with community members and committee members were held to listen and understand the services and support that may be needed. By asking "what do you need?" schools members get people engaged. Then, this group figures out how to create replicable, meaningful support and connections.

Guests are always welcome to attend regular school year meetings.

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