

'The second I got done playing... I started coaching'

# Flores carries torch in service to education, family



KEIZERTIMES/Eric A. Howald  
Jason Flores (middle) hoists a clock given in honor of his service at the Keizer First Citizen Banquet in January.

By **DEREK WILEY**  
Of the  
*Keizertimes*

Jason Flores, the 2017 Service to Education Award winner, couldn't technically coach Little League until he was 18.

But that didn't stop him from making sure his younger brother had a coach who knew what he was doing, even if that meant joining forces with his older brother, who knew nothing about baseball.

"The second I got done playing Little League, I started coaching for my little brother," Flores said.

"I was 17 and just felt like my little brother deserved more, he deserved what I got, which was really good coaching, and at the time I felt like he didn't have it."

Flores continued coaching at Parrish Little League in Salem through 1997. After a short break, he began coaching his daughters, Audri and Kaelie, at Keizer Little League in 2001.

He continued coaching them as well as his son Riley until they were in high school.

Flores didn't just stick to softball and baseball. He

also coached all three kids at KYBA, even though basketball wasn't his game.

"I'm a resourceful guy so the first thing I did was latch on to the best coaches that I knew (Ron Hittner and Bob Cavell) and sat in the practices and took notes and emulated them and I consider myself today pretty knowledgeable about basketball," Flores said.

Flores, who also served on the KYBA Board of Directors for 10 years and was president for two, coached Kaelie from fourth to eighth grade on a team that included Reina Strand, Madi Hingston and Sydney Hunter.

All four girls went on to sign with colleges and as high school teammates at McNary finished fourth in the state in 2016.

"I just did it because I thought that was the best thing to do," Flores said of coaching.

"I look back now and I had really good mentors, really good coaching and that's what helped me be successful throughout, so I wanted to give that back. They're always shorthanded, Little League, basketball, they're always needing coaches."

Flores grew up in Keizer but moved to Salem and attended Parrish Middle School and then North Salem High School.

He moved back to Keizer with his wife, Keri, in 2000.

Flores started Celtic Homes in 2013, building new

custom homes.

"Our mission is to be successful and then bring everyone around us to have success as well and then give back," Flores said.

"If I'm successful, then I give a lot back. I don't have a set amount. I don't have an equation for it. I just stay involved."

Along with donating to McNary Athletic Booster Club's turf field project, Flores helped install the goal posts and revamp the old scoreboard, fixing lights and painting.

"We were going to have opening day on the turf with this old cruddy scoreboard," Flores said. "I couldn't let that happen. We couldn't do an opening day on a brand new turf field with an old scoreboard with lights not working."

When the booster club started an Adopt a Celt program in 2016 for McNary athletes who couldn't afford to play, Flores took the entire bill, \$2,000 for 40 athletes, the first year.

"It didn't go over very well so I just adopted them all that year," Flores said. "I just said give me the bill. I like that fundraiser. Whatever they need in that bucket, I'll make sure it's full. I never want a kid that wants to play sports not be able to play because of money."

Through Celtic Homes, Flores also helped build new softball dugouts at McNary and this summer he plans to team up with Salem Electric to install a new scoreboard at the turf field.

"It's based on my prosperity," Flores said. "The Lord has blessed me. We've done really well the last few years."

Flores was stunned to receive the Service to Education Award on Jan. 20 at the Keizer Chamber awards banquet.

"There's a lot of dads that are just like me," he said.

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