

Beacons shine a light on youth sports

By **MATT RAWLINGS**
Of the Keizertimes

The stats don't lie, high school sports matter.

Students that participate in high school athletics are more likely to have a better daily attendance rate, earn better grades and have a lower drop-out rate.

Multiple studies have also shared how 95 percent of Fortune 500 executives were involved with athletics in high school.

Unfortunately, the participation costs of playing high school sports can be a tough price to swing for many families.

Currently, it costs student athletes \$175 to place a high school sport in the Salem-Keizer area— these fees are capped at \$350 per student and \$700 per family.

That is why the Salem-Keizer High School Sports Booster Club exists.

The purpose of the Salem-Keizer High School Sports Booster Club — otherwise known as the Salem-Keizer Beacons — is to help offset the cost of participation fees by providing athletes with scholarships to play their favorite sport.

Bryan Sutherland, the president of the organization, has been involved in athletics for most of his life. Sutherland was the athletic director at West Salem High School from 2008-2015. He also has been a football and softball coach for many years — Sutherland currently is an assistant coach for South Salem High's football and softball squads.

Sutherland was a baseball player all throughout childhood and ended up playing collegiately at Eastern Oregon University. He acknowledged how important athletics has been in shaping the person that he is today and wants to make sure that kids in the Salem-Keizer area get those same experiences, regardless of their financial situation.

"I want kids to get those same benefits and experiences that I got. And to have the same opportunities that I had," Sutherland said. "That's not

to say athletics is better than music or drama or anything, but I want kids to be involved and connected in their high schools, not for the purpose of getting scholarships, but for the purpose of getting to the

school and then ultimately being employed and being good citizens."

While the Salem-Keizer Beacons organization was revitalized in 2017, the non-profit began in 1994.

Originally, the organization was dedicated to ensuring the future of high school athletics in the Salem-Keizer area by replacing the funds that were

being eliminated due to budget cuts.

The booster club was run by multiple athletic directors and found success funding by hosting bingo nights throughout the year according to Sutherland.

However, for many different reasons, the club was inactive for decades, until Dave Johnson and Mike Maghan — both former athletic directors and board members for the Salem-Keizer Beacons — helped resurrect the organization in 2017.

Johnson and Maghan brought Sutherland on board to be the president for the revitalized club. But the three men, along with additional board members, were in agreement that they needed to change how they were going to use their funding.

The board eventually decided that the best way to run the non-profit moving forward was to donate money they fundraised towards providing financial scholarships to Salem-Keizer student athletes.

"We were worried that pretty soon, kids weren't going to participate. Because

our community."

Salem Health and WVP Medical Group share many of the same patients and most importantly, a passion for a vibrant, healthy community," said Dean Andretta, chief financial officer of WVP Health Authority. "This is an excellent opportunity for two strong entities to improve health care for

what happens is its not just \$175. You also need to have insurance, an up-to-date physical and proper equipment. So it became our goal to try and offset those costs for kids and their families that need it," Sutherland said.

The Beacons organized their first event in the fall of 2018 — which was a banquet that honored people who had given back to the Salem-Keizer community.

Thanks to sponsorships and numerous donations, the Beacons were able to raise just over \$30,000 at the banquet — which gave them the ability to donate \$5,000 to each Salem-Keizer high school.

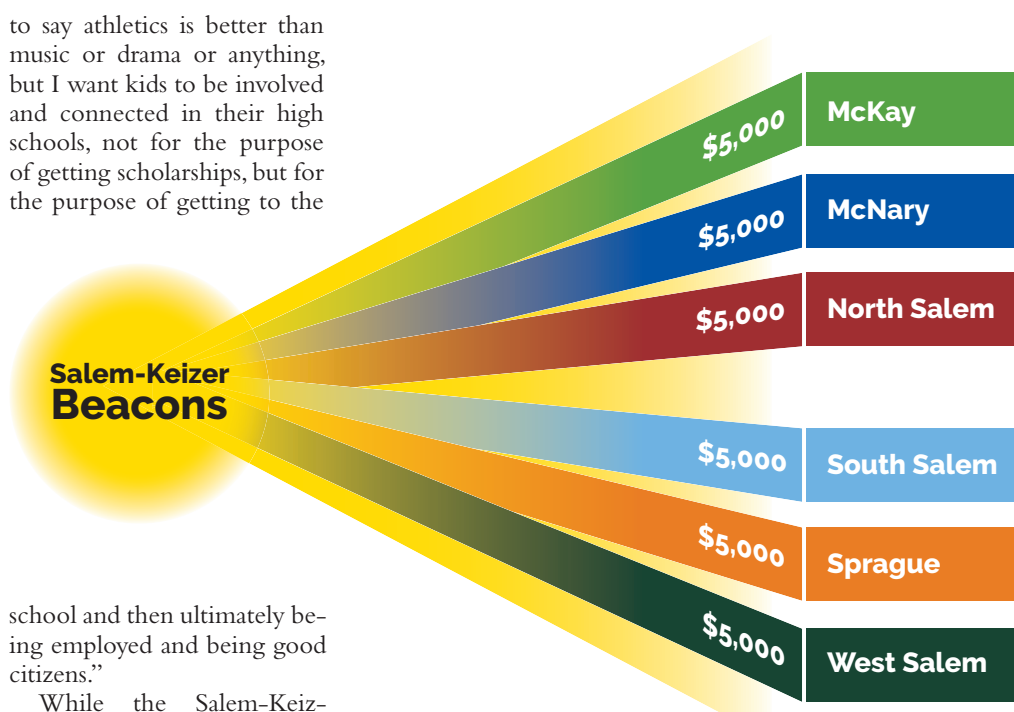
The athletic directors at each school are entrusted with the money to give out scholarships based on the requests they get throughout the school year, as long as there accounting of where the money goes.

"We're not going to micro-manage, but we want to have gender equity and have the money spread out amongst different sports. I don't want to look and see that nearly all the money went to football," Sutherland said.

According to McNary athletic director Scott Gragg, the school received 32 scholarship requests in the last calendar year, and thanks to the donation from the Beacons, as well as help from the McNary Athletic Booster Club, all scholarship requests were paid in full.

"McNary graduates 99 percent of our student-athletes. If graduation is our goal, athletics is extremely important and effective in a student's education," Gragg said.

The Beacons will be hold-



KEIZERTIMES/Andrew Jackson

ing their second annual ceremony on Saturday, Feb. 1 at 5 p.m. at the Salem Convention

Center.

Bob and Pam Zielinski will be two of the honorees of the evening for their volunteer work involving McNary sports over the years.

"Bob and Pam's contributions to our school have been extremely beneficial over the years," McNary principal Erik Jespersen said. "Their donations of both time and financial resources have helped make McNary's facilities top-notch over the years. Their collective advocacy and support for McNary can't be overstated."

The late Ted Anagnos will also be honored as a community beacon at the event.

"Ted Anagnos was a pillar of the Keizer community. He was a successful businessman who parlayed that wisdom and leadership into the lives of thousands of kids over the last 30-plus years," Jespersen said. "Ted and Susan Anagnos

generously donated financial resources to our facilities and he was a beloved coach in our football program for years. He was firecracker of a guy who was a friend and mentor to anyone who had the privilege of knowing him."

While Sutherland and the Beacons are committed to giving each school \$5,000 this year, he is hoping to grow the organization exponentially in the years to come.

"If we can keep at this and it becomes special, I'd give them \$100,000 if we could raise that kind of money. If there is any kid right now not participating because of a lack of money, we don't want that to happen," Sutherland said.

Currently, the annual banquet is the only fundraising event that the Beacons have. To provide a donation, make a sponsorship or buy tickets to this event, visit www.salem-keizerbeacons.com.

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Salem Health purchases WVP

Salem Health recently purchased WVP Medical Group.

The purchase brings six additional primary care clinics to Salem Health Medical Group's care: WVP Boulder Creek, WVP Flaming Medical Center, WVP Keizer Clinic, WVP Independence-Monmouth Family Medicine, WVP The Doctor's Clinic and Dallas Family

Medicine.

"Salem Health and WVP Medical Group share many of the same patients and most importantly, a passion for a vibrant, healthy community," said Dean Andretta, chief financial officer of WVP Health Authority. "This is an excellent opportunity for two strong entities to improve health care for

our community."

Salem Health and WVP Medical Group have many details to work through in the coming months. The primary focus at this time is to ensure a smooth transition for patients, providers and staff.

"The partnership between Salem Health and WVP Medical Group has flourished in recent years," said Cheryl Wolfe, president and CEO of Salem Health. "Formally joining hands reflects a mutual interest to deepen that coordination for the good of the community."

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