

# VOLUNTEER *of the Week*

presented by



## ERIC HOWALD

### Where and how do you volunteer?

"I advise two clubs at McNary High School: Write Club (10 years) and the Gender-Sexuality/Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA, three years). I'm more of a teacher with Write Club, with a focus on creative writing in all forms and publishing a book of student work at the end of every school year. The GSA requires me to be more of an advocate and accomplice in the things students want to do to make McNary a safer and more welcoming place for LGBTQ+ students. I mentor the students in other ways outside of club meetings, some through college and beyond. Both groups are collectively known as "my kids" to anyone who knows what I do."

### Why do you volunteer?

"Because I want to be the type of person I needed when I was their age."

### What does volunteering do for you?

"In every way, my kids have made me a stronger, more courageous and better human being."

### How would you get others to volunteer in their community?

"I started volunteering with teenagers before my biological child, Ameya, reached that age. Learning to speak their language and walk beside them through difficult moments made me a better parent. Making Ameya cringe whenever I pull out a reference to meme culture is the best of all the unexpected benefits."



## 500+ cross podium at MHS graduation



**BY MATT RAWLINGS**  
*Of the Keizertimes*

Just over 500 students walked across the stage over the course of three ceremonies as the McNary High School Class of 2021 received their diplomas at Volcanoes Stadium on Wednesday, June 9.

Elise Ali, Annie-Leigh Besa, Isabella Biondi, Cielo Chavez Hermenegildo, Jasmine Chen, Hannah Condello, Abigail Covalt, Leah Douth, Camila Garcia Monroy, Gavin Gasperini, Alivia Hall, Ashley Hawley, Isaac Johnson, Layne Ling, Leilani Morris, Elise Myers, Yahir Olmos Lopez, Dyami Rios, Katherine Ronning, Nicole Russell, Luke Skipper, Emma Stephen, Tobias Straw, Trevor Thompson, Madyson Trammell and Samuel Woodward were the 26 students that received valedictorian honors.

Madison Alt, Alexandria Beard, Kennedy Buss, Joseph Hartsook, Reyna Terrazas were each named salutatorians.

"These outstanding students embody an impressive depth of knowledge and skill. They have demonstrated a strong dedication to academic success and have made us tremendously proud," McNary principal Erik Jespersen said.

Abbi Covalt, the student speaker for McNary's 57th commencement ceremony, shared that while the Class of 2021 endured one of the most tumultuous and unique years' in the history of the school, through the process, they were reminded of what is important in life.

"We graduated, ironically situated in a global pandemic. The West Coast caught on fire and an ice storm shut down our city. A president was impeached twice, there were riots in the state and nation's capital, Olive Garden was closed, and we had to risk our lives to go to Target," Covalt said. "COVID changed a lot of things for us, but we were reminded to never take