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Chuck Lee meets with a trio of students on the CTEC campus. FILE PHOTO, Keizertimes

**LEGACY:** *'He just fell in love with the town'* **Continued from page A1**

the body's involuntary (autonomic) functions, including blood pressure, breathing, and motor control — there is currently no cure for the disease.

Even with a crippling disease ravaging through his body, Lee was a fighter until the end according to his wife.

"He was a fighter. That was how he lived his life. He was always fighting to raise the last dollar during a fundraiser and he was fighting through the last days of his life," Krina Lee said. "He was persistent. He had tenacity."

Lee was born and raised in Seattle, Wash. and was hired at the age of 25 to become the principal of St. Alphonsus School, making him the youngest Catholic school principal in Washington.

Despite being from Washington, the city of Keizer, or in his words "God's country," was the place he was most fond of.

"He just fell in love with the town," Krina Lee said

In 1995, Lee founded Blanchet and became president of the school two years later — a role he served in until 2013. Under his direction, Lee helped Blanchet triple their enrollment and raised over \$16 million for tuition assistance, renovations and school programs — Blanchet has established a scholarship fund in Lee's name.

The summer before the school opened, Lee delivered Blanchet sweatshirts to every student in the school as an official welcoming gift. For his entire tenure at Blanchet, Lee also made it a tradition to deliver handwritten notes of encouragement to every teacher in the school.

"I think it was a way for him to reveal how much he cared," Krina said. "Appreciating people and letting them know that they are supported was very important to him."

It didn't take long for Lee to become a fixture in the Keizer community. Using the Volcanoes Stadium parking lot to host a fundraiser for Blanchet, Lee became close with Salem-Keizer Volcanoes owner Jerry Walker, initially bonding over their mutual love of the Washington Huskies. Lee wound up sponsoring Walker in the Catholic Church and later became his godfather.

Lee and Walker would work together for the next 25 years to host fundraisers for Blanchet, as well as other philanthropic

activities in the area.

"Chuck was a visionary who was able to think big and possessed the unique ability to deliver results. His ideas became reality. A man of faith, who earned the respect of the longtime leaders of the community by doing what he said with honesty and integrity," Walker said.

Catholic education was incredibly important to Lee, but so was being an active citizen, which is why Lee ran for a seat on Keizer City Council in 2001 — Lee was elected and served on the council for six years. He also ran for mayor unsuccessfully in 2006.

"He loved politics and he loved running for office. He felt like it was his responsibility to show kids that it was important to be a part of the community you live in," former Keizer Mayor Lore Christopher said. "When he took charge of a project, you knew you could rely on him to get the job done."

At the Keizer City Council meeting on Monday, Sept. 20, Keizer Mayor Cathy Clark proclaimed Sunday, Sept. 26, 2021 as a day of remembrance and celebration of the life and achievements of Lee.

"He was all about the kids. He had a fabulously constructive, get-it-done attitude, and I appreciate the legacy that he has left," Clark said.

"My dad always said to leave something better than you found it, and I think that Chuck Lee certainly did that," Councilor Ross Day added.

After being a city councilor for six years, Lee decided that he wanted to serve in a different capacity as a member of the Salem-Keizer School Board. Lee was elected to represent Zone 6 (Keizer) on the board, where he served three terms from 2007 to 2019. In 2014, Lee played a role in the hiring of current district Superintendent Christy Perry.

"Chuck was an amazing community leader. In the boardroom he always worked to bring people together. He was focused on students and what was best for the district in supporting students. He always cared for others before himself. An incredible leader and human," Perry said.

Diversity and inclusion were at the core of Lee's motivation as a principal and school board member.