

PHS students share holiday joy with community

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The halls of Pendleton High School have been busy with not only academics, but efforts to give back to the community with a little holiday cheer. The PHS Leadership Class recently finished up a pair of projects.

The annual canned food drive, which is a district-wide project, includes all Pendleton School District schools collecting canned/nonperishable goods. According to a press release from Ronda Thornburg, executive secretary to the superintendent, they are dropped off at the high school for tallying and then picked up by three local groups who split the goods — CAPECO, The Salvation Army and St. Mary's Outreach. The organizations will distribute the food locally.

On Dec. 8, the food "corral" down the hall from the main office was bursting at the seams as leadership students organized the food items. The goal of the drive was 8,000 cans. PHS classes had already contributed 3,241 items, which according to Stu Clem, Leadership advisor, is one of the highest amount collected at PHS.

The totals collected from each school are: PHS, 3241; McKay, 1844; Sherwood, 2595; Washington, 1265; SMS, 500; PELC, 1033. The efforts resulted in a grand total of 10,478 food items.

Sophomore committee member Anika Urbina said helping community families has been a positive experience for her.

"It really shows our school spirit, and it's not an expensive way to make a difference," she said.

Owen Golter, also a sophomore, said several teachers really got into

the competition, which resulted in more donations.

"It's cool how people are willing to share, which helps everyone enjoy the holidays a little more," Golter said.

The other effort that has kept PHS Leadership busy in December is the Adopt a Family project. PHS student groups sign up to help a certain number of children by purchasing gifts. Various organizations, like PHS Leadership, girls' soccer, boys' and girls' basketball, National Honor Society, FFA and more have participated. PHS Leadership gets the gift tags from The Salvation Army with the needs of specific children, including clothing sizes and gift wishes.

Thornburg, in the press release, said PHS Leadership has participated in this project for many years. They are providing gifts to 34 children this holiday season.

The four Leadership committee students who have worked on the Adopt A Family project have really enjoyed it. They said they know there are families in Pendleton who can't support all their needs and it's exciting to contribute to the effort. Junior Hadley Brown said it's great for PHS teams and clubs, too.

"I think it helps the culture within your team or club to work together on this," she said.

Junior Rylee Demianew agreed, saying the work is worth it.

"It's really great to think of kids waking up on Christmas morning and experiencing joy."

Contact community writer Tammy Malgesini at tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4532.



Ronda Thornburg/Contributed Photos

Members of the Pendleton High School Leadership Class help tally and sort donations for the annual food drive. The December 2021 effort resulted in the collection of 10,478 food items, which will be distributed through local food banks.



A Pendleton High School hallway near the office served as a "food corral" in December 2021 as members of the Pendleton High School Leadership Class helped organize donations for area food banks.

Arts center says goodbye to longtime development director J.D. Smith

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Friends of Pendleton Center for the Arts are invited to stop by to say farewell to J.D. Smith, the longtime PCA development director.

The drop-in event is Wednesday, Dec. 29, 10 a.m.

to noon, at 214 N. Main St., Pendleton. Masks are required.

There will be a short program at 11 a.m. for board members, staff and



Smith

anyone else who would like to attend.

Smith, who begins his retirement the following day, has shepherded the organization through its first 20 years in the renovated Carnegie Library building. According to a press release from PCA Director Roberta Lava-

dour, Smith leaves a legacy of having started the Art Rocks Teens program, including the free Rock & Roll Camp, now in its 16th year, among many other accomplishments.

"Keeping a nonprofit arts

organization financially stable for two decades is no small feat," Susan DeMarsh, PCA board president, said. "We would not be where we are today without J.D.'s skilled work."

For more information,

contact 541-310-7413 or director@pendletonarts.org.

Contact community writer Tammy Malgesini at tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4532.

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26th Annual Christmas Spirit Award Presentations

Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation is pleased to announce the following as the 2021 Christmas Spirit Award Recipients:

Tom & Abbie Ditton

Tom and Abbie have a long, and mostly quiet, history of helping people in need while also being very active within our community. They serve in a variety of capacities at St. John's Episcopal Church. Tom, a local attorney for 39 years before retiring in 2013, served on the school board for many years and continues to be an active member of the Kiwanis Club. Abbie is the current president of our local P.E.O. Chapter CV that provides support, scholarships, loans, and grants to women pursuing educational goals.

They have mentored and supported local high school and college students with encouragement, support, and personal financial assistance. They are quick to contribute their time and energy without recognition or praise. Tom is known to occasionally pick up hitchhikers and help them when they are in distress. Frequently, he takes people to medical appointments in Hermiston and Tri-Cities. After retirement from his law practice, he volunteered to play his long-forgotten trumpet in a horse mounted band for the Round-up parade. Abbie too has been no less influential in supporting local causes.

Tom and Abbie raised two generous children that have contributed to their communities in their own ways as well. The Ditton home is always ready to welcome family and friends. The extent of their generosity is known and appreciated by those who have received their gracious support within the community.

It is for these reasons that Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation, which strives to make our community a better place to live, has selected Tom & Abbie Ditton as 2021 Christmas Spirit Award recipients.

Scott & Melissa Purswell

Scott and Melissa are long-time believers in helping other people. They often turn individual contacts with others into personal friendships and relationships.

Scott and Melissa's efforts include providing meals to those in need and those that are celebrating milestones, giving recognition for hard work, and developing special bonds in diverse settings. They spend endless hours serving others in distress with a can-do attitude and mentality. Their advocacy on behalf of others has changed lives. Their warmth and friendliness are a blessing to all. These characteristics have been shared with their two boys that live life full of heart.

Scott has spent much time and effort with our local LaCrosse league and Melissa has led the way in creating and implementing kindness campaigns that will impact our community for good for many years to come. They infuse our community with professionalism and can-do attitudes. Our area ball fields, gyms, special projects, and service organization events are replete with the name of Purswell Pump listed as "sponsors" or "supporters." The family, including their business, is dedicated to the success of Hermiston and its residents.

Hermiston is Scott and Melissa's village. They feel strongly about youth, families, and are instrumental in building strong relationships to foster individual care for all. They are highly sought after for their expertise in a variety of capacities and their willingness to support is infectious. They are true role models and examples to those around them.

It is for these reasons that Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation, which strives to make our community a better place to live, has selected Scott & Melissa Purswell as 2021 Christmas Spirit Award recipients.

The Foundation mission is to enhance the quality of life and general health of residents living in West Umatilla and Morrow County communities by raising funds and giving to community projects. Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation reviews funding requests and makes awards for worthwhile projects twice a year. The next deadline for submitting grant applications to the Foundation is January 31, 2022. Groups or individuals interested in making a donation or being considered for funding are encouraged to call the Foundation office at 541-667-3419.

Best wishes for a happy holiday season!

GOOD SHEPHERD COMMUNITY HEALTH FOUNDATION