Club

from 1A

In Henry's proclamation, he mentioned that BGC serves more than 500 young people annually and "instills young people with the confidence that they can succeed in anything they put their mind to."

When Roblan addressed the people in attendance, he said, "It takes a whole community to make a Boys and Girls Club. It can't be just one person. It has to be a lot of people working diligently to make it work."

Roblan stated that building such community centers, like BGC, can be easier in larger cities because they can be bankrolled by large corporations or celebrities.

"But they don't exist like this in rural Oregon," he said. "So you have to figure out how to make the community see this as a thing that has to happen to make a change in the life of kids. That's why I love being in rural Oregon."

Roblan, who previously worked a decade in education, spoke to why programs like BGC are important in encouraging youth to succeed.

"I'm a dyslexic, ADHD human being," Roblan said. "Elementary school was not fun for me. I couldn't learn to read, and I can't spell to this day. When I finally figured out how important education was, I became an avid reader and believed education was the most important thing. Those experiences led me to become a teacher, in large part, because I didn't want other kids to go through what I went through."

Roblan became a math teacher, a subject that he gravitated toward because it was a universal language that could bridge divides.

"Kids succeed not because they love math, but because they have a relationship with someone teaching them," Roblan said. "It doesn't matter if the relationship is in the school district, or other places. The responsibility of a community is to find that caring adult wherever they are and connect them to that child.

JARED ANDERSON/SIUSLAW NEWS

Oregon Sen. Arnie Roblan tours the Boys and Girls Club of Western Lane County's new Nan Osborne Teen Center with Johnny Garcia, of A-Action Mobile Home Moving in Veneta, which orchestrated the move.

Once you do that, magic happens, and every child can be successful and get out of all the other problems that kids face. There are opportunities for them to do the wrong thing every time. Caring adults make a difference."

In Roblan's estimation, the Siuslaw region holds a vast resource of caring adults that can make a difference.

"You have some amazing people in Florence," he said. "You've got scientists who have their own moon rock collection. People who have done things all over the world come here to retire. And when you ask them to spend a little time with kids, those are experiences that can make a difference in people's lives and give them the reason to go on. And it gives them the belief in themselves."

That pool of experiences, along with dedicated staff, is what makes the program work, BGC Executive Director Chuck Trent said.

"We have the future leaders of America sitting in the room with us and coming to this club every day," he said. "We have (staff) to thank, because they spend the time with these kids every day. But because of you, every person in this room that have given so generously of your time and resources, none of this would have been possible without you all.

"Our kids are the club. Our staff is the club. You're the club. You guys are the Boys and Girls Club, because without you, none of this would be possible."

For more information about the Boys and Girls Club of Western Lane County, visit bgcwlc.org.

Special Series

from 7A

And just because a school resource officer is present during a shooting doesn't mean that they will always act. In the Parkland, Fla., shootings, a resource officer remained outside the building during the shooting. The officer contended that it was because he believed that shots were coming from outside, while others accuse him of cowardice.

The fact is, armed officers who are able to engage shooters don't always survive the encounters. According to a 2013 FBI study, of 45 active shooter incidents, 9 police officers were killed and 28 were wounded; 3 armed, non-sworn security personnel were also killed, and 2 unarmed security officers were killed.

Because of the often short response time, and the notion that officers don't always stop school shootings, it has been suggested that teachers arm themselves. But if trained officers can have difficulties with school shooters, would a teacher prove to be more effective?

Pitcher remains agnostic on the issue of arming teachers, saying, "School policy is school policy. Whatever they say, I'm perfectly fine with."

But the one thing that Pitcher wants people to keep in mind during the debate is that teachers need to be trained if they carry a firearm.

"There are a lot of things that go along with owning a gun. And not everyone is comfortable having a gun. I wouldn't make someone who isn't comfortable with a gun have a gun. But if you're comfortable and everything allows it, you need to be trained and have continual training. Not just how to shoot that weapon, but *when* to shoot that weapon," he said.

After the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in 2012, National Rifle Association (NRA) vice president Wayne LaPierre stated, "The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun, is a good guy with a gun."

He suggested putting armed officers in every school in the nation.

After the Parkland shooting, President Donald Trump suggested "giving concealed guns to gun-adept teachers with military or special training experience — only the best."

He suggested that 20 percent of teachers would be able to fit that criteria.

But corroborating that 20 percent of "gun-adept" teachers cited by the president is extremely difficult.

Some gun reformers point to gender when speaking about the ability of teachers to fire weapons responsibility. A February 2018 article published by VOX asserted that 76 percent of public school teachers are women, and only 22 percent of women in America own guns, ergo, finding trained teachers is not possible.

However, those statistics make some pretty broad generalizations, first and foremost being that a female-led profession could not produce responsible and effective gun owners.

One example against that argument is the Tennessee resource officer cited earlier in this article. Her name was Carolyn Gudger, and she saved lives. Generalizations may paint women as less capable with a gun, but facts do not support that.

In addition, Trump was not looking for an entirely armed teaching force — only a portion of teachers.

But the Vox article does point out a fallacy in the president's assertion that there are teachers with military or special-training experience. While exact figures on exactly how many military personnel enter the field of education — a program called Troops to Teachers, which helps veterans transition into educations, only had around 20,000 participants since 1993.

While it's wrong to think that all militarily trained teachers go through that program, it does hint at the idea that 20 percent of teachers with military experience isn't accurate.

Instead of relying on an already existing pool of firearms-trained teachers, school districts could instead look to training teachers. This has already been occurring in the U.S. for years.

After the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in 2012, Clarksville School District in Arkansas looked into hiring a resource officer, but found it was too expensive, according to a February 2018 article by CNN.

"Hiring one school resource officer would have cost the district about $50,000 a year," the article read. "The district spent at least $68,000 training about 13 staff members when the program began."

The opposite end of that equation is Utah, where anyone with a permit to carry a concealed weapon can take a loaded firearm to school without telling the principal, and no firearm training is required.

While Clarksville has not reported any injuries since implementing its program, Utah has. In 2014, a sixth-grade teacher in Taylorsville, Utah, accidentally discharged her weapon while in the faculty bathroom, shooting her leg. In this case, students weren't in immediate danger during the discharge.

But just last month, a teacher in Salinas, Calif., accidentally fired a gun at the ceiling while teaching a public safety course. A student contends that they were struck by debris from the discharge.

Another recent incident in Dalton, Ga., found a teacher barricading himself in a room, firing one shot out the window.

The teacher had apparently been going through a crisis and was talked into relinquishing his firearm by a school resource officer without incident.

In both of these cases, physical injury was either non-existent or negligent.

But Pitcher's concerns about teachers carrying firearms goes beyond the physical — it's the psychological aspects of teachers carrying firearms that gives Pitcher pause.

"If, as a teacher, you're going to have a gun in a school, then they need to think about the mental preparation of having to do that and being able to survive that afterward," said Pitcher. "If you dedicate your life to teaching kids, and you have to be put in that position, can you do it?

"And what is it going to do to you afterwards?"

While there is anecdotal evidence that properly trained personnel could lead to fewer school shooting deaths, do more guns in general equal a safer society?

And while armed resource officers may be a way to react to a school shooting, are there more proactive ways to stop gun violence through legislation or by providing more social services to identify at-risk students?

Is the solution a combination of both?

These and other questions will be examined in the fourth segment of the series.

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