

WATCH *from page 1A*

"It's amazing to be a part of."

While the program was created with fathers in mind, anyone involved with a child's life can help, including mothers, grandparents, aunts and uncles.

"You get to spend that time with your kids, and you get to know the people that they're spending most of their waking time with," Haring said. "It gives you a great insight."

On Monday, the local Watch DOGS program had its second annual kick-off, signing up guardians of students at Siuslaw Elementary School, a program that will "bring you closer to your kids," Haring said, though at first, he had his doubts.

When Watch DOGS was first introduced to the school last year, Haring, who is now the "head dog" of the program, said he thought to himself, "It sounded like a neat little program, but was it necessary in our little school?"

Ultimately, "I just wasn't that into it," and Haring pushed the program out of his mind.

Weeks went by as other Watch DOGS started showing up at the school. That's when Haring's first-grade daughter, Danni, started needing him about signing up.

"When are you going to do it?" she would ask. Haring still wasn't into it. "Dad, are you going to come?"

Still nothing. "So-and-so's dad was there," said Danni.

Soon, it became apparent that Haring showing up at school was really important to his daughter, "So I finally caved. After one time, I was hooked," said Haring. "It was so amazing, I tried to do it once a month after that."

Haring broke down how the day works for the attendees at this past Monday night's meeting.

"When you come in in the morning, one of the staff in the office will help you sign in, you will get your Watch DOGS shirt," he said. "That way they'll know how you are when you're walking around school. I did not have one one day, and I almost got tackled in the hallway by a lady because she thought I was just lurking around. You definitely want to want to wear it because she's a spry lady."

The Watch DOG will then go out to the entryway and high-five kids when they come in for the day.

"You would be surprised how many high-fives you get in one day," Haring said. "The kids are stoked to have you there."

After that, it's off to the classroom with their kids.

"They put you to work if you ask," Haring said. "You could be helping the kids with their math and stuff. Taking them out in the hallway and doing one-on-one reading."

The 'DOGS help their own kids, as well as the rest of the students in class.

"There's kids in her class, some of those guys are just amazing. They're hilarious," Haring said. "They'll ask you some of the most random questions. You get to know most of them on a first-name basis. Kids that aren't even in her class get to know you after a couple times being there."

Sometimes helping can be tutoring, while at other times it can be setting up lessons, such as science experiments.

"One of the biggest barriers to doing real science in elementary school is the setup factor of science experiments," Siuslaw Elementary School Principal Mike Harklerode said. "It can take an entire prep peri-



JARED ANDERSON/SIUSLAW NEWS

A father looks over the annual calendar with his daughter, choosing days he can help in her classroom at Siuslaw Elementary School.

od just to get that ready, and then it's over so fast. Having another parent's hands in the classroom makes a huge difference in making that work."

Before Haring started Watch DOGS, these kinds of issues were unknown to him.

"I never realized how much they do, and how hard their job is, until spending a day not even doing it but just watching it. These people work," he said. "We are so fortunate. We have some of the most amazing, patient teachers."

Haring found that he soon became a partner with the teachers, aides and staff that work with Danni throughout the day.

"I would come on and say, 'After the 15th, what do you got going on?' We would work it out that way so I would come in when she needed an extra hand," Haring said.

Harklerode pointed out that the interactions can also help parents understand the school system more.

"Last year, we had a lot of dads say, 'Oh, now I know why you do the pickup this way after school,'" he said. "But until you're here and helping with it, it's one of those things that defy explanation. But if your involved with how it works, it really answers a lot of those questions."

But one of the biggest advantages of the program is that it helps families and

children grow closer, Haring said.

"We were doing PE outside one day, and the kids are running around like crazy. We're kicking the ball every once in a while. The PE teacher looked at me and said, 'This is some of the most valuable information you're going to get. Your kids are going to school here for a while. You're going to get to know the kids they're hanging out with.'"

That conversation got Haring thinking about how he normally interacted with Danni.

"Your kids spend more waking hours with the staff in this school and these kids than they do with us," he said. "We pick them up, go to dinner, then go to bed. We get them ready for school then drop them back off."

With this routine, Haring had a certain picture of what his daughter was like — shy, quiet. But at school?

"Turns out she's not as shy as I thought," he said. "She's actually kind of a ham and a goofball. ... It's shown me more of a different side of her. It really gives you a better idea of how they are when you aren't around."

After Watch DOGS, the conversations Haring has with Danni are a lot more meaningful.

"She wants to tell me about all the kids at school now because I know who they are," Haring said. "If so-and-so tripped and fell

down, and goofy stories, she's always coming home and telling me. Or if they're out in the gym playing and somebody kicked a football into the bleachers, she comes home and tells me — and you can put a face with the name."

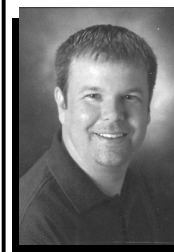
And by being able to do that, "It brings you closer," Haring said.

While the kickoff for the program was Monday, the school is looking for Watch DOGS year-round, and applications are always accepted. The DOGS get to pick dates that are best suited for them, and there's no cost involved.

"It's such an amazing experience," Haring said. "I never thought it would be so well expected and such

a fulfilling experience. Your kid will absolutely love it. After that day, your kid will come home and be like, 'I want to know when you're coming back.'"

Applications can be completed in the main office, or by going online at www.siuslaw.k12.or.us/volunteers-17.



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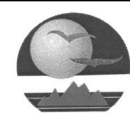
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