

## Learning to make a difference

BY MATTHEW GRAHAM

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Deonta Dorn wanted to do something for hungry students at Oregon City Service Learning Academy, so he came up with the idea for a community breakfast that would serve two purposes – it would feed students at his school and at the same time help the sophomore class raise money for Community 101.

“I wasn’t sure it would come through,” he said, but students and community members showed up and donated \$165 last Wednesday.

Senior Brittany Larson also helped put on the community breakfast, and said she was pleased to see members of the community, parents and members of the school district administrative staff attend the event.

Community 101 “is a class put together by the PGE Foundation, and is funded through the Oregon Community Foundation,” noted sophomore class advisor Matt Schulfer, a math and PE instructor at OCCLA.

His students were given a \$5,000 grant, and then had to do some research of non-profit organizations, to determine which ones were going to receive grant money.

“They chose three focus areas: stress, depression and self-esteem; child abuse; and arts and music,” Schulfer said.

Students then contacted 10 non-profits that fit into the focus areas, sifted through applications, chose organizations to support, and then wrote acceptance letters to the four agencies selected.

This Friday, representatives from Morrison Child and Family Services, the Jackson Street Youth Shelter, KBOO radio station and Homowo African Arts and Culture will attend a ceremony at the school to receive checks.

### **Service Learning**

Oregon City Service Learning Academy is a charter school through the Oregon City School District with a different approach to earning high school credit.

This is the academy’s third year, noted Melanie Marrone, principal, and although some of the curriculum has undergone changes through the years, the focus on service learning has stayed the same.

“Service learning is the process that connects in-class academics with meaningful service in the community. We are the only school with this much focus on service learning,” she said.

On Monday, Wednesday and Friday, all 120 students are at the school in the classroom, and on Tuesday and Thursday, the students are with their mentors, Marrone said. Freshmen and sophomores do group projects, like the one through Community 101, and juniors and seniors do two individual projects.

One reason the academy works so well, Marrone said, is “because we are smaller, the staff and students are all connected and care about each other. If a staff member sees someone struggling, they can ask another staff member what is working. We have the opportunity to talk about the kids and meet their needs.”

Through a partnership with **Clackamas Community College**, academy students have the opportunity to earn one college credit for every 30 hours worked at their internship site, she noted.

Marrone added, “We’ve come a long way in helping students understand how they fit into the whole global community.”

### **Student projects**

LaToya Jacob, 17, is a senior at OCSLA, and her service-learning project literally deals with a larger community.

“I’ve been volunteering with Medical Teams International since October and my mentor and I put together a project called Hope Kids,” she said.

The organization puts together hygiene kits to be sent out to worldwide refugee camps and locally to homeless shelters and clinics. Someone from the shelter or clinic usually comes to collect the boxes, but LaToya decided she wanted to deliver the boxes herself, and see the organizations in action.

She has visited a number of resource centers, and said the experience has been a good one.

“I get an inside look at the people who really need [these items], and I can tour the facilities and talk to the staff,” she noted, adding that privacy issues don’t allow her to talk to any of the patients at the clinics.

“I love it – I have learned so much. We are so sheltered here – people in other countries don’t have what we have here,” and even people in this country don’t always have the resources, she said.