

**COLUMBIA COUNTY**



**OREGON**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **PRESS RELEASE COLUMBIA COUNTY**

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### **St. Helens Community School Impacts Local Middle School Youth and Families**

In January 2009, St. Helens Middle School began operation of their Community School. Since opening the doors to these new activities, over 200 students have participated daily. Activities are open to St. Helens students grades 6 through 8.

The Community School is funded by the Columbia County Commission on Children and Families through a grant from the Oregon Commission on Children and Families (OCCF). It is a collaboration of students, parents, teachers, organizations, and community members supporting the increasing needs of the local school and the community. Through the St. Helens Community School (SHCS) young people thrive, families are supported, community resources are maximized, and the community strengthened.

Earl Fisher, County Commissioner and Chair of the local Commission on Children and Families says, "Community Schools build character and protect the community. They're an important part of our communities and schools."

The St. Helens Community School (SHCS) provides supervised extended-day activities for students. The start up activities include Tae Kwan Do, juggling, homework club, Funky Foods, Anime club, game club, drama club, and fitness club. Activities are being added such as: rugby, hip hop dance, scrapbooking, environmental, karaoke, book, math, stock market, chess, and co-ed volleyball. After school tutoring and homework help are an important part of the program. Parents and community members can also attend classes such as financial counseling and planning and computer skills.

The St. Helens School District received funding for the Community School through a statewide competitive process. Funds are a part of the Community Schools Initiative sponsored by OCCF. Community Schools are focused on school success and are required to show an improvement in academic scores of the students participating in activities at the end of this school year.

According to Jan Spika Kenna, Director of the Columbia County Commission on Children and Families, “St. Helens Middle School staff have done an outstanding job implementing their Community School. After school programs are a priority of the Columbia County Commission on Children and Families (CCCCF) and we are proud to be a partner with them.”

Community schools combine the best quality educational practices with enhanced and extended day programming to ensure that children are physically, emotionally, and socially prepared to learn. Community schools function as community hubs where public and private resources converge to address barriers to learning through shared leadership and shared accountability for student learning, healthy families and thriving communities.

Joanna Rau, Principal of St. Helens Middle School says, “We have approximately 25% of 6th-8th grade students in this community participating in the St Helens Middle School Community School Program. This is extremely exciting and I am so thankful for the grant funding, volunteer support from community members, and dedication from school district employees. We are starting to see positive impact on student success in school as a result of students engaging in the Community School Programs.”

According to Fight Crime Invest In Kids, “America's law enforcement leaders know from experience and the research, that the hours from 2 to 6 PM on school days are the prime time for juvenile crime. Studies show that after school is the peak time for teens to commit crime, be a victim of crime, be in or cause a car crash and smoke, drink or use drugs. Quality, constructive and highly supervised programs can cut crime immediately and convert after school hours into safe learning time.”

For more information about the St. Helens Community School, call 503.366.7316 or email [communityschool@sthelens.k12.or.us](mailto:communityschool@sthelens.k12.or.us). For more information about Community Schools, visit the Coalition for Community Schools website at [www.communityschools.org](http://www.communityschools.org) and Fight Crime Invest In Kids at [www.fightcrime.org](http://www.fightcrime.org).

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