Invest in our Future...
Volunteer with Students

Olathe Overview
562 Active Volunteers - includes classroom and youth mentor volunteers

Dates to Remember
March 11-15: Spring Break
March 18: Professional Day (for elementary and middle school only)
April 12: Professional Day
May 22: Last full day of school

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Classroom Focus... Debby Brewer

Debby started volunteering in her daughter’s preschool classroom after retiring from teaching in the Olathe district. When her daughter decided to no longer teach, Debby placed her focus on volunteering at Tomahawk Elementary where her grandchildren attend. Debby usually helps out two mornings a week. Her routine includes shelving books in the library and helping the librarian with small groups. “Once a teacher, always a teacher” Debby said. She also helps the fifth grade teachers by running off materials for that day. Other mornings Debby helps the kindergarten teachers with prep work—making booklets, copying, cutting paper for various projects and other duties as requested.

“Debby has volunteered in my classroom for the past two years. She faithfully comes every week to help prepare materials for me. She is awesome!” says Suzanne Lynn, fifth grade teacher.

Debby shares, “I love being part of the Tomahawk ‘family’, helping where needed and getting to see my grandkids at school. It’s so rewarding to have time to be able to give back to the teachers and children.”
Mentor Focus...Dave Gilbert

When the Walnut Grove Elementary principal and counselor visited Dave Gilbert’s church five years ago and shared the need for classroom volunteers and lunch buddies, Dave felt a need to help since he had recently retired. Dave started mentoring in 2014 with one student and that number has now grown to visiting four students at four different schools ranging from first to sixth grade. Dave does his mentoring all in one day and creates a schedule with each school. He says “we have to understand each school is different and work with staff as a support in any way possible.”

When Dave starts mentoring a new student, he emphasizes a few of his ground rules which he believes are key to building a trusting relationship. His first rule is “we never lie to each other” and secondly, “you don’t have to talk about anything you don’t want to.” His third rule is “if a student states they are going to hurt themselves or anyone else, I will report this immediately to the counselor or teacher.” Lastly, Dave lets his students know he will continue to mentor them as long as they would like, even if they move to a different school in the district.

Jaime Englis, counselor at Summit Trail middle school, says “Dave has a huge heart and truly takes time to get to know the students he mentors. He relates to students personally and works to move them forward. We appreciate his time and efforts!”

Building a relationship with a student takes time. It is important to understand every student is unique and every year is different. Bonds get built with time and trust and finding common ground helps connect with students. Dave lets his students know that he grew up with some dysfunction in his life. This helps them understand that he can empathize with some things they may be going through.

Dave recalls mentoring a student several years ago that ended up getting suspended for fighting. When the student returned from suspension, he wouldn’t say a word and just sat there during their time together. Dave sat quietly with him in silence. Finally, the student asked him “are you going to leave me the way all the others have?” Dave replied, “I’m here, aren’t I?” Over time the student started getting better grades, was on the honor roll and getting along with others. Dave expresses, “take your time and don’t give up; it’s worth it!”

Heritage Elementary counselor Kelly Knipp knows Dave has devoted a great deal of his time to being a Youth Mentor. “He reinforces skills and topics that lead to success in school and beyond. We are so grateful for the encouragement he gives to students to help them succeed.”

Being consistent and dependable is key to a mentor/student relationship working. If Dave ever has to miss a scheduled visit, he lets the school know so the student doesn’t feel forgotten.

Reflecting on the Olathe Volunteers Serving Schools program, Dave says “I’ve grown so much as a person due to this program and feel very blessed to be a part of it.”
We are in need of more one-on-one youth mentors!
Please let our staff know if you can help mentor a student during lunch or seminar time at one of the following schools.

Elementary:
- Central: need one female
- Heritage: need one male mentor

Middle School:
- Santa Fe Trail: need six male mentors
- Oregon Trail: need one male mentor

We would like to remember these valued volunteers who passed away this school year:

In Memory of Rick Royer

In Memory of Scott Brunk

In Memory of Dick Schwartzbeck

In Memory of Shirley Hoffman

In Memory of Sue Cindric
End of Year Volunteer Celebration

Date: Tuesday, April 16

Time: 4-5 p.m.

Where: Olathe Northwest High School (Commons)

Address: 21300 College Blvd., Olathe, 66062

You won’t want to miss it! There will be entertainment, refreshments, grab bags and door prizes

Look for the invitation by email next month!