

The Theler Legacy Continues

Many of you who have been following the Theler property and the issues surrounding it know that Sam and Mary Theler wanted to benefit our community with a lasting heritage but more specifically it was the intent that the properties benefit the youth in our community.

Several years back, a majority of the school board voted to surplus Theler. The district was concerned that upkeep of the building and grounds would take away dollars from our students. How do we fulfill the will and benefit the students?

The answer came from a series of meetings with the community, board members, district staff and our Superintendent Dana Rosenbach, leaving no stone unturned. The idea was to use the distinct parcels for different uses and to partner with those could implement the highest and best use for the property.

As many of you know, early childhood education is very important. The more students that enter Kindergarten on the same page with the same level of knowledge, the further the teacher can take everyone on their educational path. Many parents, educators and community leaders do their best every year to get our students off to the right start but we are often strapped for resources.

That was until Superintendent Dana Rosenbach went through the Theler Community Center with our Capital Projects Manager. They discussed ways to revamp the building (formerly a section of Belfair Elementary that was relocated across the street to the Theler grounds) to house volunteer community programs for pre-K, early learning from birth to 3, parenting classes and English as a second language classes.

The possibilities are endless but here are a few facts:

- We currently have room for 36, 3-5 year olds for Head Start and ECAP slots.
- Estimates show we have over 134 children that could use the opportunities the program offers.
- We are only serving 27% of the eligible children.
- The children living in our district aged birth -3 are provided with services from outside of our district.

- This volunteer program can be expanded and serve many more children in need.
- We can offer parenting classes.
- We can offer language classes for non-English speaking parents through a partnership with Olympic College.
- We can expand communication between parents and educators benefitting students.
- We can offer additional support to teen parents through a co-op partnership where they work at the pre-school their children attend.
- In addition to all of these services we can partner with other pre-school providers in the North Mason Community to provide curriculum and training to help establish an articulated pre-math and pre-reading program for ALL early learners in North Mason.

This is just the beginning and there are many more contributing ideas that we will be exploring over the next few months for a robust program. With a solid start on our student's education there is no telling just how far our graduates will be able to go. Pay close attention to the year books coming out, as you may be seeing the next Einstein, Marie Curie, Sally Ride or future President of the United States in the class pictures.

Rest assured your North Mason School Board of Directors and Educators are going to be doing everything we can to help our students achieve anything they set their hearts and minds to.

Dinah Griffey

North Mason School Board Director