

Tahoma Community News

November 2021

Tahoma School District

Maple Valley, WA 98038

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Students thank bus drivers

Maple View leadership students plan kindness surprise

When bus drivers pulled into Maple View Middle School recently at the end of the school day, they were met by a crowd of students, holding colorful signs thanking them for their work.

“I think we all said they’re one of the most underrated parts of the school district,” said Talan B., a seventh-grader who is in the leadership class that came up with the idea. “Without bus drivers we wouldn’t have school. We said, ‘Let’s encourage them, and give them some motivation.’”

The effort is the first in a series of kindness projects that teacher Jen Dunham’s students want to accomplish at Maple View this year.

Students Romy C. and Shahreen T. designed smaller thank you cards, which Dunham had printed so that each member of the class could write personal messages of thanks to the drivers.

“We just wanted to do something nice for everyone,” eighth-grader Liv C. said. “I appreciate that they put the protocols in order so that we don’t get COVID, because that’s important.”

Classmates Addy S. and Macy O., both eighth-graders, said that they appreciate the fact that the drivers wake up so early, handle long drives in a lot of traffic and also often make the time on the bus fun.

Lyla B., a seventh grader, recalls one time in second grade when she had a



terrible day at school, and the comfort that a simple conversation on the ride home offered. “My bus driver talked to me about it, and it just made my day better for some reason.”

Student Kassidy V. said her bus drivers are always really nice, greeting her and wishing her a great day. “It just makes you feel like someone cares and makes you feel more important,” she added.

The students made cards and signs for the drivers of Maple View’s 22 bus routes, but offered their thanks and appreciation to drivers and bus monitors throughout the district.



Tahoma is hiring subs, bus drivers, paras, more

There are so many great opportunities right now to expand your role in our Tahoma family. We have job openings in a number of buildings and departments. We love to have friendly faces in our schools – faces of those who are already deeply invested in our district, and care about helping Tahoma students! If you’d make a great addition to our Tahoma team, please consider checking out our job board and dropping in an application.

If you’re passionate about being the first happy face that greets our students when they get on the bus each day, consider joining our outstanding Transportation team as a bus driver (starting at \$29.29 - 30.86/hour). The district is currently offering a \$3,000 bonus for new permanent drivers who already have all the required school bus driving credentials. New drivers needing paid training will start and be paid as substitute drivers, and will be reimbursed for their CDL licensing expenses after working with us for 30 days. To learn more or to apply: tahomajobs.myschooldata.net/.

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Together again: Students, staff make full return to buildings



This first-grade student at Cedar River Elementary School brought teacher Kari Angeline a flower for the first day of school.



Above left, a Bear Crew member welcomes students to the start of a new year at Tahoma High School. Above right, two Summit Trail Middle School students walk into the building on the first day. Tahoma staff were ecstatic to welcome all students back to our buildings for the new school year on the first day of classes. Thank you to our students, staff and families for helping us to start off this new school year the same way we made it through the past 18 months -- together, and with grace, understanding and resilience.



Nutrition Services teams serve lunches with love

It's hard to learn, if you're hungry.

It's an obvious truth, but so central to what Tahoma's Nutrition Services staff members do that it's important to recognize their major contribution to the district's overall mission.

During non-COVID years, the members of the Central Kitchen staff and each building's Nutrition Services teams carefully plan and prepare meals for Tahoma students. Throughout the pandemic, the team has adjusted and adapted, serving meals curbside and now in brown bag meals that are free to any student. But their impact is much larger than simply putting meals on plates or in to-go bags – for many students, the friendship and warmth that kitchen staff members offer is a high point in their day.

That relationship piece is one of the best parts of the job for some of the staff members. Tahoma High School Kitchen Manager Karen Olson (left) said she enjoys talking with the students as they arrive for breakfast or lunch. She and her team members care so much for the students that they often warn them, "I'm gonna 'mom' you!"

"It's great being able to see the kids coming through, and having them all back in the building," Olson said.

Assistant Manager Cheryl McGuire (middle) agreed, noting "They get excited to see us, just like we get excited to see them. We care about them, and we're invested in their well-being."

In non-pandemic years, the high school



team has significant creative license with their menu, as long as they meet the nutritional requirements and standards. They've come up with a line of creative pizzas and strombolis, as well as fun entrees such as bento boxes that the high school students enjoy. For now, though, due to restrictions and supply chain issues, they're focused on the basics.

"Right now, it's really about getting the kids fed," Olson said. The high school team serves more than 50 breakfasts and more than 500 lunches each day, compared with a high of 450 before COVID-19.

A student who wrote a thank you note to McGuire said, "You always radiate positivity. You make it hard not to smile and be in a good mood. I'm extremely thankful for everything you do, every day."

In another thank you note to the high school team a student wrote, "Thank you

all for being so kind and friendly to every student that you see. ... The simple smiles you all give and the 'Have a good day's can really make a difference in someone's life, and I know you guys are already making that difference."

Breakfasts and lunches are free to all students this school year. At the Central Kitchen, about 1,200 sack lunches each day for elementary students. Requirements call for distributing individually wrapped or pre-packaged portions (rather than serving students in a line in the cafeteria). That sounds simple, but in actuality, it makes more work for each kitchen team.

Nutrition Services Supervisor Mary Nowak said that since March of 2020 her whole team has adapted very well, stepping up and working diligently. "They have been extremely flexible throughout," Nowak said. "We were on the curb (serving meals)



when we had poor air quality, snow and freezing rain."

Rock Creek Principal Chris Thomas said his team of Melissa Delacruz, Julie McKenney and Diana Young "is efficient, positive and flexible to meet the specific food needs of students. They are the best!"

While working to pack some of the daily 1,200 sack lunches at the Central Kitchen, Leesa Sandiford (above) talked about why she likes her job.

"I really enjoy being a lunch lady. Students are always very happy to come and get lunch," she said. "There's nobody that's not smiling, when it's time for lunch."

TAHOMA C·A·R·E·S

Our 2020-25 strategic plan for success

OUR MISSION

Together, provide the tools and experiences every student needs to create an individual, viable and valued path to lifelong personal success.

OUR VISION

Quality Learning

Every day

in every classroom

for every child



OUR VALUES

Excellence

Ensure each student receives an exemplary education that is academically challenging and meets their social and emotional needs.

Collaboration

Foster partnerships with families, community and staff.

Leadership

Effectively identify and monitor goals and targets that serve as a north star, allowing for a clear, shared vision.

Equity

Eliminate opportunity gaps and achieve excellence by providing access to schools, resources and learning opportunities according to each student's unique needs.

Stewardship

Manage our resources to honor the community's investment in our schools; create safe, healthy and sustainable environments; support civic engagement; and serve current and future generations.



Our School Board and other district leaders heard from thousands of students, staff and community members when developing a five-year vision for our district. When you look at the five focus areas that form Tahoma CARES, you'll see that, like all of our work, students are at the center. That's why we involved our community in adopting this long-term plan.

It takes more than our staff to help a student truly belong to our Tahoma family and to one day leave Tahoma High School as a young adult equipped with the skills to take on the world. Of course that includes academic success;

but equally as important is developing the social and emotional tools that are so crucial to their journey.

Thank you to everyone who helped take our passion for students' success and turn it into a strategic plan that keeps students at the core of our work, and will help create a district of belonging for ALL students, staff and our community.

Everyone has a right to learn in an environment that supports their growth. Tahoma CARES was built to create that environment in our district.

- Mike Hanson, Superintendent



Learn more at [TahomaSD.us/CARES](https://www.tahomasd.us/CARES)

Student Reps bring voice to School Board

Five Tahoma High School students are serving as this year's Student Representatives to the Tahoma School District Board of Directors. This year's representatives include seniors Olivia Tamer and Mathieu Chabaud, who each served in this position last year, and three new representatives: junior Aditi Rana, junior Madison Bennett and senior Sanjana Sanjay. These young leaders shared their interests and reasons for becoming Student Representatives.

Tamer: "I believe student voice is crucial along with the voice of board and district members because it helps bring the community more together by including our students in discussions and decision making. Student voice also encourages kids to go out there and try to impact the community in a positive way. With students' input, we can help the district be molded better for everybody in it."

Chabaud: "Having a chance to see the whole school board process, between work studies, committees, and School Board meetings has been the most helpful. Deciding on the schedule for the high school was the most impactful out of this; seeing

the various forms of feedback given on different plans, and the end results of it, and having a chance to be involved in the process, was a great, if slightly overwhelming, introduction to the role."

Rana: "I'm most interested in learning more about how the board and the district overall is working to help support students, whether that be through equity work, social and emotional resources, or academic opportunities. I would also love to learn more about human resources and community partnerships, and feel like participating in discussions relating to these issues would be both beneficial and insightful."

Bennett: "I am most interested in learning about and participating in conversations that regard our schools' collective mental health, supporting any learning and social/emotional gaps due to COVID, and ways to integrate the community with new learning opportunities."

Sanjay: "As a student representative this year I want all students to feel comfortable coming to us



From left, Aditi Rana, Olivia Tamer, Madison Bennett, Sanjana Sanjay and Mathieu Chabaud.

for any concerns and hopefully, we can direct or help to answer any questions they have. I hope that our student representative group this year will reach many more students in hopes to make Tahoma a better place for all of us to feel comfortable and safe while we navigate and learn how to thrive after college."

Read more at: bit.ly/TSDstudentBoardReps

Parent Michael Wiggins selected to fill vacancy on Tahoma School Board



Our newest School Board Director Michael Wiggins says that he looks forward to connecting with Tahoma families and helping to strengthen the partnerships throughout the district. "I think the relationships have always been a great thing about our district," Wiggins said, noting that's why he and his family moved here 18 years ago. "I'm looking forward to working with the other directors, Superintendent Hanson, and the entire community of Tahoma staff and families to ensure that we continue to provide the best

education and opportunities possible for all of our students," said Wiggins, who took the oath of office in a public meeting on Aug. 27.

Asked what he wants the community to know about him, he noted that many issues have become very politicized. Wiggins emphasized that he isn't entering his role on the School Board with any political agenda, and promised to be a critical thinker and consider policies on a case-by-case basis. "The role is to work with the community and establish policy that works (for Tahoma)," he said.

Upcoming Board meetings

The Tahoma School Board of Directors invites you to join them in person or online at upcoming Tahoma School Board meetings. Meetings are open to the public and being held in person at the district office, which is located at 25720 Maple Valley Black Diamond Rd SE in Maple Valley. Meetings are also available to watch live online. For Board meeting dates, or information on how to virtually join a Board meeting, visit bit.ly/TSDschoolBoard.



Tahoma Community News is produced by the Tahoma School District Communication Office and mailed to all school district residents four times a year. Contact the Communication Office by calling 425-413-3409 or by email to AJ Garcia, Public Relations director, at: ajgarcia@tahomasd.us

The Tahoma School District does not discriminate in any programs or activities on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, veteran or military status, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.

The following employees are designated to handle questions and complaints of alleged discrimination:

Title IX Officer

Director of Human Resources
25720 Maple Valley Highway
Maple Valley, WA 98038
425-413-3400
TitleIX@tahomasd.us

ADA Coordinator

Director of Human Resources
25720 Maple Valley Highway
Maple Valley, WA 98038
425-413-3400
ADA@tahomasd.us

Section 504 Coordinator

Director of Special Services
25720 Maple Valley Highway
Maple Valley, WA 98038
425-413-3400
Section504@tahomasd.us

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