

LARRY KESLING '75

Nominated by: Natalie Szymanski '06

Larry Kesling is a 1975 graduate of Clay High School and lifelong resident of Oregon. He attended the University of Toledo and participated in the ROTC Rifle Corps but chose to work at CSX Toledo Docks instead. During a 42-year career as a longshoreman here in Oregon, he was a certified welder, Chair of the safety committee, Coal Loading Mechanical Supervisor and self-proclaimed “Jack of all Trades and Master of None”. When safety in schools became a more significant priority across the nation, Larry worked with CSX to donate cleats, rope, “go buckets” and glass shattering hammers for classrooms across the district at no cost to OCS.

Larry is dedicated to helping young people have the best experience in school that he can. Over a lifetime, he has donated his time, treasure and talent to Oregon City Schools. Mr. Hank Spring worked with Larry to bring Operation Lifesaver to our schools. With this program, he trained high school students getting their licenses how to drive safely on our community roads. He visited elementary classrooms to educate young people to respect the dangers of the railroads. In later years, Larry worked with junior high gifted students reading Rocket Boys to share how the coal industry impacts our local community.

Larry served as an inaugural board member for the Eagle Learning Center. This cutting-edge online school was one of the first of its kind as a local online school within a public school district for credit recovery.

Additionally, he has volunteered in the parent organizations from elementary through high school for six of his seven children (Nicole Kesling-LaDuke '00, Allison Kirkley '03, Drew Kesling '08, Maggie English '10, Olivia and Cooper Kesling '27). When Larry and his wife lost a child to anencephaly, they chose to enrich the lives of the children who would have been her classmates by making monetary donations to the schools. There are now items such as puzzles and classroom libraries at Coy Elementary, picnic tables at Eisenhower Intermediate, and benches at Fassett Junior High in her honor. They have also established a scholarship fund to be awarded for graduates in the class of 2026.

Larry served at the Vice-President of Clay High Alumni & Friends Association (CHAFAs) for 23 years. He said yes to the variety of tasks necessary to have the organization thrive. Larry is very proud of the thousands of dollars of scholarships that were given to students through the “Fundraising” efforts of CHAFAs. The organization could not have been successful without his dedication, forethought, manual labor, and common-sense decision making throughout the many years.

During retirement, Larry has been serving on the committee of Troop 112 for Scouts BSA and building sets for Oregon Community Theater’s children and adult productions.