

NW Rotary Club of Columbia and West Boulevard Elementary School

“Service above self” is the mantra of Rotary International, and the Northwest Rotary Club of Columbia fully embodies that mission in its partnership with West Boulevard Elementary School. In 2012, Northwest Rotary Club joined the Partners in Education program with a proposed focus on mentoring and spending time in individual classrooms to support both students and teachers. In the five years since, that partnership has become an indispensable part of life at West Boulevard —Rotarians can be found in classrooms every two weeks, reading to students, helping with projects and assisting teachers during work days.

Northwest Rotary Past President Tom Trabue made sure to deflect praise for the partnership to the late Richard Hauschild, who passed away in March. “Richard was the impetus for this and he deserves all the credit,” Trabue says. “He made this possible.”

Trabue went on to gush about the mutual benefits of the partnership, acknowledging that the Rotarians who volunteer their time for reading and events at the school would genuinely miss the kids if the program somehow stopped. “The kids are just awesome. Everyone, kids and staff, are so welcoming to us,” Trabue says. “We love building these relationships and showing these young kids that it’s bigger than school. Our community believes in them. Can you imagine how important that is for a young child to hear? ‘We believe in you.’ It’s life-changing.”

Last year, West Boulevard needed help with a special project and the Northwest Rotary Club pitched in, helping with infrastructure, donating supplies and hanging leadership banners throughout the school. This all-in spirit never ceases to amaze West Boulevard Principal Susan Deakins, who credits the club with contributing to the culture of the building.

“They provide such tremendous value, from reading to the kiddos to spending time during arts days to bringing community members into the fold,” Deakins says. “They are very, very committed. They’re helping dig garden beds. They’re helping us identify grants. They do it all, and it mirrors the spirit of Richard Hauschild. He did so very much for us. We’re so grateful for the entire organization.”