

2015 RURAL HEALTH HERO OF THE YEAR



The Oregon Office of Rural Health is proud to present this year's Rural Health Hero of the Year Award to Bobbie Steninger. Following are submission excerpts from those who supported the nomination.

EXCEPTIONAL CONTRIBUTION

In rural Oregon, there is an imminent healthcare workforce shortage. Bobbie Steninger has been working on the cure; recruiting and training the next generations of healthcare workers. Bobbie has been teaching and coaching in Lakeview, Oregon for over 50 years. Starting out in 1962 with no classroom, a bare bones budget and the germ of an idea, she has grown that idea into a four-year course in health care careers for Lakeview High School students. What makes Bobbie's contributions exceptional is Bobbie herself. She is consistent, steadfast and committed. She gives her students incredible respect and in return expects the highest level of accountability from them. In interviewing one of her current students, she said "You know you always have Bobbie on your side. She makes it a million times better."

"ABOVE AND BEYOND"

Bobbie's enthusiasm for her students and the subject matter never wanes. When we talked to her current and former students about this very topic, they gave a myriad of examples. Following are two highlights:

Lakeview High School is small. Creative scheduling is often called for to fit Bobbie's classes into her students' schedules. This past year, many of her students would have been precluded from continuing with her classes because of the academic schedule so Bobbie agreed to teach one class in "Zero Period" – before school officially started. This meant that she was up on her ranch at 3:00am, feeding her livestock and getting the chores done before dawn – all so her students could continue the four-year course of study.

One year Bobbie had laparoscopic knee surgery the day before a blood drive was to be held by her students. She crutched her way into the drive to show her respect for the students who put on the drive and for the blood donors.

Bobbie volunteers training the ski patrol and organizes free pre-sports physicals by local practitioners. When you combine her teaching and coaching duties (none of which she would describe as a duty), you get the Lakeview equivalent of the Energizer bunny – she keeps on going and going!

IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

The Lakeview community is stronger, healthier and better prepared for health emergencies because of the work Bobbie has done with these students. Her students, who are all trained as athletic trainers and who support all

of the sports at Lakeview High School, make a difference. Bobbie's 50+ year career has already had a long-term impact on the Lakeview community and while many of her students have remained in or returned to Lakeview, there are hundreds living and working in other rural areas of Oregon who received their health care career starts under her tutelage. One Lakeview resident said, "All of the members of my family who took advantage of Bobbie's classes in high school are also now in jobs in the medical field because of her influence and teaching." Bobbie's students are serious, dedicated and enthusiastic about their abilities. Most go on to college or to additional education beyond high school. Bobbie has given them the confidence to further their education and has provided them with a role model for being a valued member of a community.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Bobbie is an amazing, dedicated and humble educator. No one has done more to impact rural health care in southeast Oregon than she. In the Cascades East Area Health Education Center region – an area encompassing almost 37,000 square miles (about the size of Indiana), we are fortunate to work with incredible health care and education professionals and students. Bobbie stands head and shoulders above the crowd (which isn't easy since she's on the short side). She is dedicated to the students and the community of Lakeview, supporting the advancement of emergency response, increasing interest in health careers and assisting in the success of her students toward health careers. Bobbie is just like that pebble you tossed in the lake...the ripple effect of her efforts go on in all directions.

I had the privilege of knowing Bobbie in a variety of settings, beginning when I took her Sports Medicine class my freshman year of high school. Her class is where I found my passion for helping others through medicine. Throughout high school, she worked hard with me as a student to allow me numerous opportunities, including helping with athletic training services at home and away games for our sports teams, as well as getting me introduced to our local EMS chapter so I could do ride-alongs with the ambulance crew. Bobbie always invested so much in her students to give them the best education and opportunities possible to help shape their paths.

I am currently a junior in the OHSU School of Nursing program and I would not be where I am today if it hadn't been for Bobbie. Her teaching opened me up to the world of medicine. She taught me how to be a first responder and later, an athletic trainer. Bobbie built the foundation upon which I would base the rest of my life. Being exposed to that world at such an impressionable age inspired me and many others to pursue a career in the healthcare field.

Bobbie has been an inspiration to me since I met her. She piqued my interest in medicine when I took her emergency medical responder class as a high school freshman. Her courses have also prepared me well for college. Since they are college-level, I will have over 20 credits going into my freshman year from her classes alone. Every day she challenges me to do my best and to learn something new.

My kids are the third generation in my family to have had the privilege of being taught, coached, mentored and loved by Bobbie Steninger. Bobbie is Lakeview's most valuable treasure and a mighty force in the lives of the people she comes in contact with. My children are now pursuing careers in the medical field because of Bobbie's commitment to teaching and her passion for equipping students with necessary skills that they will carry into the working world. Bobbie's students graduate high school with CPR, First Aid and First Responder certifications. They can become EMTs and volunteer with the local emergency services that Bobbie established in Lake County. All of the members of my family who took advantage of Bobbie's classes during high school are now in jobs in the medical field because of her influence and teachings.

CONGRATULATIONS, BOBBIE STENINGER, AND THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU HAVE DONE AND CONTINUE TO DO!