

Elaine Ebeling nomination

Parent

When you walk into an event at Willowbrook High School, there's one face you're almost always sure to see – parent Elaine Ebeling.

Ebeling has one alumnus and one current student at Willowbrook, and her positive impact on the school will last long after her children graduate. Ebeling is a member of nearly every parent and community group at Willowbrook, including the District 88 Foundation and the Citizens Advisory Committee. She also served as co-coordinator of volunteers for the school's Young Hearts for Life Cardiac Screening Programs in 2016 and 2018, which involved finding volunteers, communicating with them and helping to make sure the events ran smoothly. That program offers free electrocardiograms to identify high school students at risk for heart conditions.

Ebeling's efforts are even more apparent through her involvement with the Willowbrook Parent Organization (WPO), of which she has been a member for eight years and has served as President for the last six years. Under Ebeling's leadership, this group has raised more than \$50,000 to provide student scholarships and support other student needs.

“I truly love organizing events, researching new fundraising ideas, building on a vision and, most importantly, being given the opportunity to help students meet their goals,” Ebeling said. “I hope students will not only reach their goals, but ultimately pay it forward and help others reach their full potential. I also hope students remember hard work and perseverance pay off, whether it be in school or at a job. Students should recognize the importance of making a contribution, whether it be with their time, talent or treasure. Being able to realize which of those qualities they possess and contribute those in the most effective way they know how can truly have a positive impact in someone else's life.”

But Ebeling doesn't just participate in the groups listed above – she goes a step further by envisioning, developing and implementing new programs to benefit students. Ebeling worked with administrators to form the following programs.

- WPO Craft Fair: In the two years this event has taken place, it has raised nearly \$22,700 to support Willowbrook students through scholarships and other student needs. This past fall, the fair featured more than 150 vendors and more than 900 attendees – and it's thanks to Ebeling's efforts. She's involved every step of the way – from finding and contacting the vendors to marketing the event by creating yard signs to helping organize the room layout.
- WPO Trivia Night: For three years, Ebeling helped prepare this event, which involved reaching out to local businesses to secure raffle donations and prizes, working with the staff at Willowbrook to come up with trivia questions and engaging the school community through promoting the event.

- Cinderella's Closet: When Ebeling learned Willowbrook has a student population of more than 46 percent low-income, she immediately got to work on a new project. She contacted local companies and dress shops and started Cinderella's Closet, where people can "be green" and "recycle" gently used Prom and Homecoming dresses for other students to enjoy.
- WPO Winter Apparel Drive: Ebeling also recognized many students and families are in need of items such as gloves, hats, scarves and coats. So she and the WPO organize an annual winter apparel drive, where community members donate those items.

“Having a parent like Ebeling take the lead and work with us to create events to assist our students and families truly is everything,” said Willowbrook Principal Dr. Daniel Krause. “When you have a person who is willing to do whatever it takes to find the resources and people to support our kids and promote public education in the community, there’s nothing more you can ask for as a Principal. Ebeling is very involved in the education of her own children, but she also has the passion and ability to see the big picture of how her efforts will help multiple students for years to come. She epitomizes what it means to be a Willowbrook Warrior parent.”