

The Connectivity of Our Community

Often, when someone moves to Western Springs, they are asked, “How did you find our Village?” It seems that there is almost always a personal connection that has influenced their choice to live here. People who grew up in Western Springs often return to raise their own families here, and the co- mingling of the past and the present is part of what makes our town so connected.

District 101, with 3 elementary schools and a junior high school, serves as one of the hubs of this connectivity. The connection between D101 and Western Springs residents extends beyond simply current or past attendance as a student. Many D101 teachers and staff were raised in Western Springs, themselves attending the schools at which they now teach; some have parents still living in town who are now grandparents to D101 students.

The D101 school buildings are legacies of the generosity of Western Springs residents and their commitment to an educated community. Elmer McClure, a one-time D101 school board president, donated the land for McClure Junior High School, and, to support his belief in a well-rounded educational experience, required some green space for students’ athletic pursuits. The Grand Avenue Community Center, a building older than the Village’s water tower, was once a D101 grade school, and it was only saved from demolition because of a dedicated group of Western Springs residents. The Grand Avenue Community Center now hosts a senior center, daycare, and music studio. The current D101 buildings host school, but also spelling bees, sporting events, student musicals, scout meetings, recreational team sports practices, and serve as local voting locations. In the summer, activity camps are held at the schools, allowing Western Springs youth to experience coding, art, yoga, creative writing and more.

Back in 2021, McClure Junior High served as a familiar, nearby location for an optional COVID vaccination clinic for approximately 200 Western Springs senior citizens. Staffed by D101 teachers and staff, the clinic enabled those community members most at risk to receive care as close to home as possible. What’s most impressive is that the catalyst for the senior citizen vaccination clinic was a D101 parent who called the school and offered to help.

Following the success of the McClure clinic, D101 collaborated with the Village of Western Springs and hosted another COVID-19 vaccination clinic, serving approximately 2,000 individuals, many of whom were Western Springs senior citizens. D101 teachers, staff, parents and students registered senior citizens over the phone, volunteered to staff the clinic, helped complete necessary paperwork, and pushed wheelchairs for those who needed assistance. The Village provided the Recreation Center as a local and accessible location, as well as volunteers including police for traffic control and EMTs as back up to the pharmacy staff administering the vaccine. It is the dedication of the whole of the Western Springs community that made these clinics possible.

Similar to Mr. McClure, the parents and residents of Western Springs are not only educated themselves, they are supporters of education, many in the most literal sense. Over half of the employees at D101 schools are Western Springs residents, many whose children are/were D101 students. These Western Springs residents, former D101 parents, return year after year as dedicated staff members who support the continuing education of our community, a community where close to

80% of the population over age 25 has a bachelor's degree or higher (census.gov). The teachers at D101 are equally well educated, with 83% of certified staff holding master's degrees.

The education of Western Springs' youth is a holistic and collaborative effort. We are a community of educators through not only our schools, but also through our collective and individual actions. Western Springs businesses provide many young residents with their first job and all its accompanying lessons. Residents lead by example with their dedication to the Village. It was a resident who launched the annual Tower Trot, a community-wide race event that includes the young and the not-so-young, inviting them to run, walk or push a stroller while raising money for charity! Recently, the Tower Trot raised funds in honor of a D101 teacher who unexpectedly passed away. Another resident and D101 parent, launched Safety Village in our town. Safety Village is a program dedicated to educating our community children on best safety practices in real world situations, such as fire safety and stranger danger. This is accomplished by utilizing a mock town made up with small buildings representing local Western Springs businesses.

Western Springs is a great place to live because the collective well-being of the Village remains at the center, evidenced through our residents' relationships *with* and contributions and commitment *to* the D101 schools and our local businesses.



McClure Principal Dan Chick helping a Western Springs resident.



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