

Dear WHHS Cougar Pride Foundation Stakeholders:

We hope this posting finds you all COVID-free and off to a happy and healthy start to 2021. As you may recall, we posted an online survey to solicit anonymous feedback from people interested in the work of the WHHS Cougar Pride Foundation (the Foundation). While the invitation to the survey was meant to be open to all followers (e.g., volunteers, donors, WHHS faculty & staff, students of WHHS, etc.), and there are over 2,000 of you, we unfortunately only received input from 42 people. Nevertheless, we did collect some valuable feedback that the Foundation intends to use to shape its mission going forward. This memo has been prepared to summarize that feedback and give you some examples of the recent work done as part of our awareness-raising efforts.

The survey asked ten questions designed to cover how well our supporters understand the mission of the Foundation, how well they think we are fulfilling that mission, and to solicit suggestions for what programs or projects we might commit to next if we were able to increase volunteer participation rates and/or increase our financial support. See the link below to gain access to the survey (ed: take the survey if you feel inspired to do so after reading this report out).

<https://www.whhscougarpridefoundation.org/>

Below are key findings from the feedback we received, as well as our related responses/action plans, and ways that you can help out.

1. Feedback: Most respondents felt they had a good understanding of the Foundation's mission, and that communications/information via the website and Facebook to be adequate.

Board thoughts: One way to reach our followers would be direct email lists, but that is a bit intrusive and requires maintenance and attention to keep current (i.e., requires additional resources and time). Given the generally positive feedback on this topic we intend to stick with website and Facebook for communication unless we have someone volunteer to take on this role. However, the direct email addresses for all five directors of the Foundation's board are available on the website and at the end of this post should you need any of us.

Volunteer need: We would like to implement a database of donors/supporters that can be used for direct emails/texts. We need someone to step up and take on that responsibility so that we can improve our communications.

2. Feedback: We received some constructive feedback on how we might run more effective and concentrated fundraising campaigns versus the steady drip of requests we tend to post on Facebook.

Board thoughts: Fundraising has been more challenging and more of a learning experience for the board than any of us imagined. FYI: we raise and spend nearly every penny of about \$75,000 per year to run the Foundation and, just to be clear, no one gets paid anything to govern, administer, or do Foundation business. We are constantly challenging ourselves and open to ideas for more fun and effective fundraising, and we are watching what other charitable organizations are doing to raise monies. Key ideas we are considering for 2021 include working more closely with local businesses (e.g., fun food pickups with one or more local restaurants) and partnering with more businesses. If we can get traction with these kinds of projects, we can probably do less requesting online and focus more on fundraising campaigns and matching gifts.



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Mission Statement

The WHHS Cougar Pride Foundation will mobilize people, goods, and financial resources to provide support to students at WHHS to make their participation in school sustainable and their outlook on future opportunities brighter. The foundation will organize the resources of its alumni initially and seek further leverage through other donor organizations, businesses, and friends in the community.

Directors

Shawn Doherty
John Medina
Karen Lindsay Landon
Patty Azuma Pressley
Saralyn Vance Carrillo



Volunteer need: If you would like to run a fundraiser in support of the Foundation, please let us know using any or all director email addresses below.

3. Feedback: In terms of our ability to reach all students who are in need, not just those in extracurricular activities, there is an assumption in the feedback that we have the reach we need.

Board thoughts: We feel the faculty and staff at WHHS are very well informed of our mission and our capabilities. They do a good job asking for help or directing students in need to us. Yes, we do a lot of work around extracurricular activities, and it can sometimes feel like we are bordering on an athletic booster club, but we provide the services these students need where we can best reach them. We've learned that creating a social network and providing food in and around extracurricular events is the best way for the Foundation to keep kids engaged in school and having some fun rather than just going home (to what for these students is often a challenging situation).

Volunteer need: Can you commit to a partial or full day per week or per month to work in Cougar Corner? We'd like to have a set schedule so we know when to expect help and can plan activities accordingly.

4. Feedback: If we had more financial resources and/or more volunteer hours to invest, there were good suggestions on how to use those resources. The most prevalent suggestion was that we provide financial resources for those students facing financial or family crises during the school year, closely followed by support for need-based scholarship(s) for students who want to pursue the next level of academics. There was also strong support to provide mentoring if we had more people resources.

Board thoughts: We break this section into two parts.

- (a) The financial resource focus is spot on. In fact, it is probably worth sharing an example of what happens and what we try to do. During Christmas break in 2019, a junior student living with a single mom and two younger siblings found himself parentless after the mom died suddenly in her sleep. While there are government and community sponsored assistance programs out there for situations like this, they often require the students (if not of adult age) to relocate, change schools, and separate from their siblings to receive assistance. The Foundation was able to provide temporary assistance for transportation, job search, donated furniture, paperwork for social security death benefits, mentoring, mobile phone bills, laundry and all kinds of things most 16-year-olds are not ready to handle on their own. A similar situation occurred in the Spring of 2020 with a different student. Given the socio-economic condition of the geography feeding WHHS, we expect that homeless or parentless student needs will be an issue every year. We do not have a lot of resources in reserve to cover these situations, so we do tend to scramble (read: launch a new online fundraiser) to provide emergency assistance.
- (b) The use of volunteer mentors (for group mentoring in particular) is an excellent suggestion. Why? Because we have a lot of WHHS alumni who have been successful in a wide range of professions including the military, technology, legal, education, firefighting, law enforcement, entertainment, investment banking, and other interesting fields. We have enormous potential to provide mentoring to at-risk students, to inspire them to persist, to coach them, and to build social networks. The Foundation and the WHHS faculty will consider options to best put structure around group and individual mentoring opportunities so that it is easy for all who want to share their experience with the kids to do so.

Volunteer need: Do you have experience you would like to share during a mentoring session or other skills you would like to contribute to this plan? If so, send one (or all) of us an email.



These are the key takeaways that the Foundation board noted and wanted to share with you. Two closing remarks: Firstly, we feel that we are making a difference and we are in it for the long run, so continuous improvement is part of the mentality we all must have. Secondly, there are some anchor financial donors out there who year-in, year-out give generously to the Foundation and we could not do what we are doing without; the math just would not work. Likewise, there is a small group of anchor time donors who are onsite all year round and some who come out once a semester or once a year. We need both your time and monies. We need periodic volunteers and very consistent volunteers. We need small and large donors. We need all these pieces to fit together to continue this effort. Thank you for all your support.

Board of Directors, WHHS Cougar Pride Foundation

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