Written by Connie Berg
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Russ and Leanne Christensen at an event at Kokopelli Gardens. Courtesy photo. Leanne Christensen is one of those amazing people, who you just enjoy being around. She is genuine, kind, humble and always hopeful. She shines her light wherever she goes.

When I heard that Leanne and Russ had their house on the market and were making plans to move back East, I asked if I could write an article about her. I wanted to write about Leanne because of the huge impact she has had in the Duvall community and in the Riverview School District, over the past 17 years. I also wanted to get the chance to write about her because I highly respect her character and her never-ending willingness to give of herself to others.

Leanne and her husband Russ, along with daughters Sara and Carly, moved to Duvall in 1995. Leanne started volunteering when her oldest daughter Sara was in kindergarten, and never looked back. Volunteering truly became a “family affair” for the Christensens – from the elementary level through the high school years.

Leanne has held numerous positions in PTA from chairperson to president. However, as the years passed, her involvement with teacher appreciation and community outreach became her focal point.

She shares, “In the Riverview PTAs we are very fortunate to have so many devoted volunteers and school administrators who are willing to work ‘outside the box’ and partner with each other to support new and sometimes challenging issues/events… my family and I have learned so much from our many volunteers/leaders over the years and am grateful for their mentoring.”

In 2005, she became a board member of the Snoqualmie Valley Community Network, where she has been blessed to work and volunteer with, in her words, “some of the most inspiring and dedicated people I have ever met.”

In 2005 Leanne also became a volunteer communications representative for the Riverview School District. In 2007, she was hired as a contracted employee, as the communications representative.

When asked about her family’s years in RSD, Leanne explains, “My family has had such an amazing experience in Riverview, that it truly comes sincerely and naturally to speak like a PR person for our district! I have the utmost respect and admiration for the teachers and staff, and will always be grateful not only for the education our daughters have received, but for the... compassion, integrity and inspiration imparted to them over the years by their teachers, counselors and administrators.”

As I sat down to talk with Leanne, it was immediately apparent just how much Duvall means to her. As she talked about selling her home, and eventually moving away from Duvall, the tears began to well up in her eyes. Even though it has been a long-time dream of hers to move closer to her family in Ohio, she feels she will be hard pressed to find a place as wonderful and supportive as Duvall. In 2010, Leanne’s mom passed away, and that same year, Leanne and Russ had a major electrical fire in their home. The outpouring of support from the community was ongoing and overwhelming. She and her family felt completely blessed!

Leanne mentioned Russ, her husband, several times throughout our time together. She couldn’t express enough, just how supportive her husband has and continues to be, of all she has done in Duvall. She believes that she would not have been able to accomplish all that she has, without his steadfast support of her. I took some pictures of her for this article but she requested that I use a picture she had of her and Russ together. She included the following note when she emailed me the picture.

“I would really like to have Russ included in the photo that we choose, as he has been such a special part of my volunteering efforts over the years ... without his support and encouragement both at home and with the many events I truly could not have participated or been as successful in the volunteer ventures we completed. He has always been behind the scenes and I would love to have the opportunity to shine a bit of this light on him as well.”

I think that Leanne’s own words really sum up the amazing woman that she is. She always thinks of others, before herself. We can all learn a lot from her generous spirit.

I asked a couple of people who know Leanne, and have worked closely with her, to write a few words about her. It is more than apparent from what they wrote that Leanne is very highly regarded.

Cheryl Layman, executive assistant – RSD

“Once in a while someone comes along who just makes everyone feel a little happier, a little more alive to life. This is Leanne Christensen. I’ve worked with her for ten years at Riverview and we’ve become great friends. She makes me want to be a better person.”

Laura Smith, executive director, Snoqualmie Valley Community Network

“Leanne actively looks for ways to make the community a better place whether she’s planning a community awareness event for the PTSA or helping advise the Riverview Youth Council. I appreciate her determination and positive attitude. In youth council meetings, we often use the saying ‘Be the Change You Wish to See in the World,’ and Leanne embodies this saying as she is and continues to be the change! Leanne has been the key communicator in sharing the excellent accomplishments of our award-winning students and staff to our supportive Riverview Community and beyond. Leanne’s contributions go beyond typical public relations as her heart and passion for our community is evident in all her actions.”

Dr. Anthony L. Smith – RSD assistant superintendent

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Conrad Robertson – RSD superintendent

“Over the past eleven years I have had the opportunity to know Leanne Christensen quite well through her years of volunteerism and in more recent years as a part time communication representative for the Riverview School District. When I say part time, I really mean we pay her part time but receive far more than a full time employee. Referring to Leanne as an employee of the Riverview School District doesn’t do her justice. She is really the cheerleader for the Riverview School District. It is amazing the number of people that she is in contact with; the volume of school district articles on students, staff, programs and schools; and how she brings the students and staff to life in her articles. Leanne is probably the most caring person that I have ever met. She is a wonderful mother, wife, friend, community member and, of course, ‘cheerleader.’”

Peggy Filer – teacher and Random Acts of Kindness Club advisor Cedarcrest High School

“Leanne has had a huge impact on the kindness in our community. She is the one who has shown the light on our club through her newspaper articles, by nominating the CHS Random Acts of Kindness Club for the national kindness award, and by living her life promoting kindness. Kindness has spread farther because of her. Leanne shines the light on others’ kindness, but her own life shows the best example of kindness. Our club is indebted to Leanne for any publicity we have received. She is the reason we were featured on the National Random Acts of Kindness website.”

Janet L. Gavigan, principal, Tolt Middle School

“Leanne Christensen is the role model of volunteerism for every parent or member of the community to follow. Her dedication to the school district and her commitment to all the individual schools is beyond reproach. She is a tireless worker whose sole purpose is to give back and give a hand. She readily takes on challenges and works cooperatively to make things better for students, for teachers and for parents.

“As a strong member and leader in the PTSA for every school her children attended, she always stepped up to tackle projects, trained other parents, brought in and implemented new ideas; all the while supporting the mission of the school itself. She is kind and caring, thoughtful and thorough, focused and visionary with all she does. She exemplifies the true goal and mission of the ideas behind ‘random acts of kindness’ but also demonstrates every day ‘kindness and consideration’ because of who she is. She is truly amazing and a one-of-a- kind volunteer and supporter of schools.”

I hope that I have captured the true essence of who Leanne truly is, through this article. Regardless of when or if Leanne leaves Duvall, she will be embraced wherever she goes because of her kind heart, strong faith and endless determination.

Note: Leanne will continue to report on Riverview School District news and activities until their house sells and they prepare to move.