



"Our mission is to provide a safe and stimulating Learning community for all students."

JOANN BETHANY
Principal

CASEY ALDERSON
Asst. Principal/Athletic Director

ROBIN JACKSON
Office Manager

HEATHER MERRILL
Athletics/Activities Secretary

December 16, 2011

Dear Miller Foundation:

I am nominating Ms. Erica Butler for the James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation's grant. Ms. Butler is a second year teacher who teaches a variety of science classes, two health classes and a service learning class. She is an extremely dedicated teacher who gives 150% each day, even though she has two young children, and a husband who owns a small business in Grants Pass, Oregon. She has many things that pull for her time and I know that it can feel overwhelming when you are also writing new curriculum, learning new coursework, teaching five different preps in a day, working hard to convince disengaged 9th and 10th graders that education is important, as well as responding to the mandates of the school, district, and state around teaching and learning and assessment. Like many new teachers, Erica struggles to give all the things in her life the attention she wants to give them. Time is finite and on most days there is just not enough to get it all done to the standards you have set for yourself.

Illinois Valley High School is small rural school located in Southern Oregon about 30 miles from Grants Pass, where Erica lives. She makes that commute daily and occasionally more than once as she will go into Grants Pass to get her own children and bring them out for concerts, games, and other events. This level of dedication to the students is remarkable and commendable but definitely takes time, energy, and financial commitment.

Cave Junction is a depressed community and nearly 85% of our students qualify for free or reduced lunch. We have a high number of homeless youth and many of our families deal with all the issues that come with not having a livable income. The challenges of teaching in a high school where young people have grown up in generational poverty and have never known a family member who has benefitted from education are unique. Erica has embraced these students and strives every day to be the voice that can change their future.

Erica accepts and loves each of the students who walk through her door. She builds wonderful intentional relationships with them and encourages and supports them through their academics. This year, she has accepted the leadership of a pilot program in Oregon in which our school is participating – Oregon Varsity Volunteer Program. Students in high school will be eligible to earn a varsity letter for service. Erica is leading an excited group of students through getting this started and even designed and taught a Service Learning class the first trimester. Erica would love to continue learning more about Service Learning and getting young people involved in service to their communities. She would welcome a chance to work with other professionals who have this same passion.

Erica is just the kind of candidate that you are looking for with this grant. I sincerely hope that you will seriously consider her for this award. I would be happy to talk to you at your convenience and answer any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,

JoAnn Bethany
Principal