

50 for 50 & Miles for Colton

CGRC President and physical education teacher Esther Holman celebrated her 50th birthday at the party of her dreams. On Tuesday, October 29, Holman spent the day on the Stevenson High School track with family, friends and hundreds of her students and fellow staff members. All of those who attended had a purpose: Miles for Colton.

For months, the avid runner was looking for a way to celebrate this milestone and the idea of running “50 miles for 50 years” just made sense. It was in August that she found a purpose for those miles. She read a friend’s Facebook post about a local three-year boy that was diagnosed with acute lymphocytic leukemia. As a mother of two college students, her heart was grabbed by this little boy and his family. She started bouncing the idea off of friends and her husband, Stan, to see if they thought it was a “reasonable “ plan to run fifty miles on the track and have her PE students join her in this quest. The vision? The middle school and high school students would just come out during their PE classes and see how many miles they could complete.

Before long, the support and enthusiasm for this event took off and it became a school-wide event. Principal Sarah Marino gave her thumbs-up and soon other teachers said they’d bring their students out, too, to run or walk. Students and staff joined Holman in collecting pledges and sponsors. Corporate sponsors were found. T-shirts were designed and ordered. Bib numbers were ordered for all participants.

Donations started coming in, many were in lieu of birthday gifts. Friends started saying they’d travel to the beautiful Columbia River Gorge on a weekday to put in some miles. One friend, Anna Bates, committed herself to collecting sponsors and running fifty miles, as well!

Finally, October 29th came and Holman was greeted at the track at 6:00 a.m. by friends Lori Latendresse and Chad Miller before they headed off to their work for the day. Fellow staff member Chuck Strom was already at the track hanging up signs and getting ready for the day. Soon Stan came to set up the aid station. English teacher and runner Cody Barton showed up to run a few miles with plans of walking with his classes during the day. Marino and Bill LaCombe had a meeting to go to in town, but made it a priority to do some laps before they left. Before long, students started joining the “party” and even elementary student Noah Lamb ran a mile with his mom, Jeanne, before he headed off to school.

The SHS pep band ignored the morning cold temperatures and pumped up the masses as everyone made their way to the track to start their day at school. All day long, people strolled out to the track and back to classes. The community members started coming out as the temperatures warmed up. The list of runners and walkers that showed up was definitely a “Who’s Who” kind of list: college standouts, ultra legends, international elite, Olympic Marathon Trials participant, race directors extraordinaire, and the list goes on. Colleen

Thompson, Karen Keturi, Cody Barton, Mike Burke, Yassine Diboun, Fred Willet, Bob Lynes, and Gary Tinker were just a few of the long list of visitors to share the track with the youth of today.

As the hours went by, the miles for Colton increased dramatically. Teenagers were going longer and further than they ever thought possible. Colton wasn't well enough to be out that day, but his mom, Olivia Jones said "I drove by there and showed Colton all the people walking for him... It made him really happy!"

Holman and Bates continued on toward their goal of running fifty miles even after school got out. Community members kept showing up and the sports teams made "Miles for Colton" part of their practices. The SHS football team members each ran two miles in their jerseys to finish off their day and the WRMS wrestling team ran laps and stairs as they did their conditioning, all the while keeping track of how far Holman had gone. Once she completed 199 laps, they joined their PE teacher for her emotional final trip around the track. Soon Bates conquered her goal as she ran under her "tunnel" of fans.

All along, "Miles for Colton" was not only about raising money. It was about raising awareness and providing the students with an opportunity to make a difference. By completing miles, they were giving support to Colton and his family. The soreness and fatigue was worth it. Like one of the student-created posters said "Every mile matters!" Many students did not report their miles, but that doesn't matter. The actual number would be higher than what was recorded and the support was felt. 469 people did claim a total of 2409 miles, for an average of 5.1 miles per person. Officially, \$3794.48 was raised.

Purpose accomplished.