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Icon's grandson explains the importance of community, perseverance

Cesar Chavez Kin Speaks at Corvallis Career Day

Andres Chavez isn't a famous athlete or a singer in One Direction, but that didn't stop the students at Corvallis Middle School of Arts and Technology from treating him like a rock star following his speech on community, leadership and shooting for the stars.

Chavez, grandson of the late labor and civil rights leaders Cesar Chavez, spoke to seventh- and eighth-graders on Friday, March 14 following the school's Career Day festivities.

Chavez, a 20-year-old public policy and administration student at California State University, Bakersfield, discussed his grandfather's work organizing and making social change, while emphasizing how one person can make a difference in the world. He also emphasized the effort and hard work it takes to accomplish one's goals.

"My grandfather changed the world simply by standing up and saying, 'Enough is enough,'" he said.

Chavez's speech coincided with Corvallis' mission to ensure all students are aware that everyone has a responsibility to help make the world a better place and that they can help curb injustice. Principal Bob Easton said it was a perfect opportunity for students to think about their futures.

"We are always stressing the importance of being college- and career-ready, but what we wanted to do with Andres' speech is stress the importance of community engagement and leadership," Easton said. "I think his message resonated with the students."

In addition to Chavez's speech at Corvallis, Physical Education teacher Irene Mora will take 14 students to Keene, Calif. to visit the Cesar Chavez Foundation and Visitors Center on Wednesday, March 19 to participate in a day of service. They will help clean, paint and maintain the facility, as well as visit the museum and watch a biography about the labor leader.

"We just wrapped up College Week and had Career Day, now we want to focus on community engagement," Mora said. "Focusing on community leadership will help our students become more well-rounded individuals."

Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District Superintendent Dr. Ruth Pérez said Chavez is exactly the kind of influence students need to be exposed to as often as possible.

“Mr. Chavez is not much older than these students, yet he is making it his mission to motivate them to be involved in their communities,” Perez said. “He is a very inspirational young man, and I commend Corvallis for exposing our students to such a positive role model.”

In his speech, Chavez stressed that each and every student had the potential to change the world. In fact, his grandfather had done it with humble means and no more than an eighth-grade education.

“Cesar Chavez was one of the greatest leaders of our time and it is important that our students learn about him and his contributions at an early age,” said NLMUSD Board President Margarita Rios. “I applaud Corvallis and its staff and faculty for bringing his legacy to life in such a profound way.”

Photo Caption

Andres Chavez, grandson of civil rights leader Cesar Chavez, speaks to students at Corvallis Middle School on Friday, March 14.

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