



The Gehlert/Nelson Family

Gary Gehlert (pictured above) started this fund to honor two long time Coos Bay families who shared similar values...and a marriage certificate!

John and Ina Nelson were born in Marshfield in 1911 and 1913. John started work life as a paperboy for the Coos Bay Times, and ended it as the owner/editor of the Springfield News. In that long span of time, he started an insurance agency, joined the US Navy (WWII), served on the Coos Bay (CB) school board, was a CB Boy Scout district chairman, was a member of the CB Lions Club and Pirates Booster Club (after the initiation of being tossed into the bay), was named Outstanding Citizen of Coos Bay (1949), and is a main reason we have Mingus Park Pool (vice-chairman of the committee that fought for the idea). Ina met John at the Jack-O-Lantern (where she was a waitress) when he kept coming in for coffee. She became a sought after book keeper (worked for Huggins Insurance), and was a founding member of the PEO organization in CB. Their children, Janet and Jack, both attended CB schools, and Janet came back in the 1970's to teach in the district until she retired. Two of John and Ina's three granddaughters graduated from Marshfield.

Karl and Billie Gehlert were long time residents of CB. Karl joined the US Navy (WWII), served on the CB school board, was a member of the CB Lions Club, and was also named Outstanding Citizen of CB. Billie was a school teacher for the district and was a member of the Mingus Park Pool committee. She was an excellent tennis player, a gift she passed on to their son, Gary.

Gary Gehlert spent most of his life in Coos Bay, a city he loved and remained loyal to his entire life. Gary ran the streets of CB with his beagle, Rex, playing many sports and joining the Boy Scouts. In high school, he went to State for tennis all four years, and was state champ his junior year in doubles (with Lorance Elsworth). He went on to the U of O, joined the US Army, and settled back in CB as a teacher. Throughout the years, he served on the school board and city council, was a member of CB Rotary, was assistant MHS swim coach (under Ralph Moore), and was a huge supporter of the Oregon Coast Music Festival. He retired as the principal of Millicoma Junior High. In the 1970s, Gary married Janet Nelson, joining these two families.

This fund was created to help kick start the future of someone who has shown the same character embodied by these families. They want to help a student who is: a good citizen of school and community, willing to lend a helping hand to those in need, hard working and showing focus (good grades), and interested in a wide range of activities.

Gary always believed in the power of education, the right to a quality education for all, and held fast to the notion that ALL children can succeed.