

## Edited Version

### The Surge Comes to Washington

By Linda St. Pierre, Principal

College soccer players went back to elementary school this spring! As a community service, and part of the Cascade Surge mission, nine players volunteered at Washington Elementary and assumed the daily routines of students for part of the day. Surge volunteers were Jorge Marquez, Arron Patrick, Armando Rodriguez, Tom Milroy, Chris Andre, Ben Sippola, Conner Burt, Ben Stoddard and Nathan Murphy.

The Cascade Surge is owned and operated by Surge International, a nonprofit organization. These players are choosing to serve the community through soccer by working with youth in the Salem/Keizer area.

At Washington Elementary, the Surge players interacted with students as “reading buddies” and helpers during PE class. They ate lunch with the students in the cafeteria and initiated games during recess. Students admired the well-mannered soccer players dressed in royal blue uniforms; and the Surge players quickly became celebrities at the school.

On the eighth day, a “Farewell Assembly” was held where players demonstrated fancy football feats and provided lots of audience participation. Sammy, the team mascot, surprised the audience with a visit and reminded students about the team’s motto to: “Study Hard, Play Fair, Help Others.”

Jeanne Williams, fourth grade teacher, said the students loved the players and everyone wanted to sit with them at lunch. Third grade teacher, Jill Matiskainen agreed, adding that the kids were in awe of the players and especially attracted by the fact that the volunteers played sports. A quote by Nelson Mandela sums up the experience: “Sport has the power to unite people in a way little else can. It breaks down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all kinds of discrimination. Sport speaks to people in a language they can understand.”

[www.cascadesurge.com](http://www.cascadesurge.com).