

News Release

**Everett Public Schools
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Mill Creek students and Rhonda Kaleiwahea earn American Heart Association thanks

Rhonda Kaleiwahea teaches PE at MillCreekElementary School in the EverettSchool District. She is also the school's coordinator and leader of the Skippinriffic Demo Team. For a dozen years the jump rope team and Jump for Heart have been her passions. On June 3, the American Heart Association visited Mill Creek Elementary to thank students for this year's extraordinarily successful jump rope fund-raising season and to thank Kaleiwahea for her years of energy and leadership on behalf of heart health.

This year the Mill Creek Elementary students set a goal of raising \$17,000 for the American Heart Association during PE class Jump Rope for Heart activities launched in February. They have exceeded that to date by raising \$22,500. This puts them far ahead of any school in the state of Washington and the only school in the state to have ever raised more than \$20,000 in one year. Over the last 11 years, Kaleiwahea's PE class activities have raised more than \$100,000 in the interest of heart health.

Under Kaleiwahea's leadership, the Skippinriffic Demo Team travels around Snohomish, King, Skagit, Island and Pierce counties performing jump rope routines at other elementary schools that are holding Jump Rope for Heart events for the American Heart Association. Skippinriffic members practice their routines after school so that their energetic, finely honed performances inspire others to Jump for Heart.

Kaleiwahea said, "This is a great community service project for the students and it allows them the opportunity to see outside their homes and school to the community and their needs. Heart disease and stroke are America's number one and number three killers and touch all of our lives. In 2005-06, the American Heart Association spent \$11.1 million on research related to children and heart disease."

The June 3 celebration and awards presentation included a surprise thank you from the American Heart Association to Kaleiwahea and a rock star performance by Principal Mary Ann Opperud. Because of the fund-raising success, Opperud honored her promise to dress as a rock star and sing during each lunch period. Attired in pink sequins with matching pink stripes in her hair, Opperud wowed the students with her rendition of My Guy which she crooned affectionately to the school's cougar mascot.

"When Rhonda and her team put so much of themselves into their jump rope activities, how could I not pull out all stops to show my appreciation and join in the day's celebration," said Opperud. "And we all know that a good laugh is good for the heart."

Senior Vice President, Ty Solomon, and Director Jami Obermayer of the Youth Market of the American Heart Association were present at the Mill Creek Elementary event and presented the school and Kaleiwahea with plaques commemorating their support of heart health.

