

Scholarship donation honors volunteer

Ralph Cabana is seeking to provide \$2,000 scholarships for every graduate of SPHS.

— By MELANIE CREAMER

January 16, 2008



Courtesy: Jeanne Crocker, principal of South Portland High School

Marking the donation to the South Portland High School scholarship fund are, from left, Jake Viola, president of the Student Senate, Jeanne Crocker, principal, and longtime volunteer, Ralph Cabana.

Ralph Cabana, a longtime volunteer for South Portland schools, was recently presented a check for \$5,000 in his honor for the South Portland Project Scholarship.

The donation kicked off a capital fundraising campaign that will result in a scholarship for every high school senior pursuing post-secondary education.

Cabana, who co-chairs the project, has led several initiatives to increase the number of students going to college. Every spring, sophomores visit three schools: a public university, a private college and a community college. Starting a scholarship fund was the next logical step, Cabana said.

At \$18,000 and growing, Cabana said the fund eventually would generate two \$2,000 scholarships for every senior pursuing post-secondary education.

FOR MORE

For more information, go to [target="blank">South Portland High School scholarship fund](#) or call 799-7823.

"The goal is very lofty. My thought is if you have a goal, why not make it lofty. We have a wonderful group on the committee. They are very energetic and the goal is very attainable," Cabana said.

The project has been building momentum since last spring. The committee is reaching out to alumni, business leaders and the community for support. The Maine Community Foundation has agreed to manage and invest the funds, Cabana said.

South Portland High School principal Jeanne Crocker presented the financial award to Cabana, a CVS pharmacist who has volunteered in South Portland Schools for 16 years. Crocker said she had been searching for a way to recognize Cabana's commitment to volunteerism. A plaque or medal didn't seem fitting, she said.

"He was in shock. For a public school \$5,000 is a lot of money," Crocker said. "He was so honored and appreciative that his recognition would result in scholarships for future students."

Cabana began volunteering when his son was 3 years old. Now that he's a freshman at Bowdoin College, Cabana said he understands the financial struggle that students and parents face.

In addition to being co-chair of the scholarship fund, Cabana volunteers in the sixth grade class at Mahoney Middle School. He said he reads with students and does some photocopying for the teacher.

He also runs the school spelling bee each year. A modest and outspoken advocate for South Portland kids, Cabana said the scholarship fund will allow him to continue helping students fulfill their dreams.

"I thought, usually you have to die to get a scholarship in your name," Cabana said. "The fact that they decided to honor me in this way couldn't be any better as far as I am concerned. I will be able to continue helping kids."

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