

**Amanda Torres - Sanchez**  
**Choosing Kindness**

Hello everyone, my name is Amanda Torres-Sanchez and I am a senior at Thurston High School and it is an absolute honor to be with you all today. The intent of this event is clearly to bring together those of us in our community who are most invested in helping each other to be successful in a kind way. We are to use that kindness to help each other, to support each other, to unify our community with all of our leadership and guidance. We have to show kindness in a way that emboldens and brings together a group of those who care deeply for each other because of the kindness they choose to show.

And so today, I'm here to speak with you about one small moment of kindness in my life as a way to demonstrate the kindness that I received within our city. A moment of kindness that I can now reflect on, and share with you. A moment that will shine a light on the kindness in our community and even in this room. A moment that will hopefully inspire you all to shine a light of kindness unto those around you. Together, we can see the good things happening around us and feel the positive impact from a community of those who "Choose Kindness."

This year, I have the privilege of participating in the Mr. and Ms. THS Pageant which is a fundraiser for the Children's Miracle Network at Peacehealth Sacred Heart Medical Center in Springfield, Oregon. Our goal as contestants is to raise at least \$1500 for infants in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and other neonatal equipment. We raise funds by participating in everything from our school's basketball games to "dash for cash" during halftime, to participating in dodgeball tournament fundraisers, to playing against our school's staff members in a basketball game fundraiser. In the beginning, my personal fundraising goal was \$2000 and so far I have raised nearly \$3000.

In one specific effort to reach my goal, I planned a Spaghetti Feed Fundraiser and Silent Auction which took me about 3 weeks to organize. The initial idea of a spaghetti feed was brought up by my manager at Olive Garden and she donated spaghetti for 60 people and suggested that I could hold a fundraiser. From then, I had to find a venue for it and Waypoint Community Church instantly came to mind as it is my home church and we have a lot of space for events. I reached out to our pastor and he was very willing to offer a room for my event and a

few of Waypoint's interns were also pleased to support me on the night of the fundraiser by setting up and cleaning up afterwards. It took a lot of time to make this fundraiser possible through organizing it, contacting businesses for donations, and setting it up with the help of my friends and family on the day of the event. After calling nearly 100 businesses in Springfield and Eugene, 16 of them donated towards my auction which was such a big blessing.

The kindness and help that I received from the very beginning of my planning process made me feel much more confident in the potential success that would result and reassured me that the Spaghetti Feed was achievable. One person in particular was a major component of making this fundraiser possible. A staff member at Thurston High donated so much of her time to help me every step of the way and provided me with the help I needed to find businesses to contact for donations towards the silent auction. I honestly don't think it could have been as successful as it was without her goodness and grace. She consistently showed me kindness (and a lot of patience) throughout all of the planning as she was willing to give up her time to help me. She showed me compassion when I was overwhelmed and was always quick to encourage me when I needed it the most. And she pushed me to focus on the reason why I was putting in all of my time and effort into one fundraiser; to choose kindness by supporting a major organization in our community.

To many of you, a spaghetti feed sounds simple. . . 10 of you probably had one at your house last night. But this was a real project. It was a project that took all of my time, energy, and focus during those three weeks. But it was all worth it. Through all of my work, the help I received, and the kindness that was shown to me through our community, I was able to raise just over \$1500 in that one night. All of that money is going directly into our community and impacts families in big ways like funding the NICU, raising money for a Neonatal Intensive Care Transport Ambulance, and a Pediatric and Adolescent Unit. How amazing is it that by choosing kindness, we get to have such a large impact in supporting children in the NICU.

My fundraiser truly could not have been possible without the support that I was given and the kindness I was shown. The amount of help and kindness that I received from our community made that night not only possible, but made it successful. I was shown kindness time and time again from my friends, family, community and church members, and local businesses and it was

incredibly mind-blowing to see the number of people that were willing to come together to not only support me in my fundraising efforts, but to also help raise money towards an important cause such as the Children's Miracle Network. Together, the schools throughout Lane, Coos, and Benton counties that participate in Kids Helping Kids raise over one-third of all the money that Children's Miracle Network raises each year for our local community. And we're all just kids.

I'm just a high school senior. I have many extracurricular activities and I'm also trying to prepare for my future. I'm applying to colleges and scholarships, taking two college classes, working at Olive Garden as a hostess, competing in track, and I'm a leader in my youth group at Waypoint. I have a lot going on. But I chose to show kindness in the midst of my crazy life. I chose it because I knew my kindness was helping children who truly needed it. I chose kindness because I wanted to do something big towards helping our community, towards doing the right thing.

Imagine all of the things that we could accomplish if every single person in this room chose kindness. If we chose kindness today, tomorrow, or next week. Imagine the relationships that could be built and repaired, imagine the lives that could be changed. Imagine how YOUR life could be different if you just took that one small step towards showing kindness to those surrounding you. A small act of kindness goes a long way and it has a bigger impact than most of you may realize. Just think. If you were kind to your neighbor, and then your neighbor was kind to their neighbor and so on and so forth, just envision how far that could go. Being kind has a simple ripple effect. Take a moment, and imagine.

So with that, what small step will you take towards being kind to those around you? How will you support your community and help those in need? In what ways will you choose kindness tomorrow, next month, next year? And better yet, how will you choose kindness right now in this very moment?