

Jeffrey Charbonneau challenged guests with, "What will you do next to support your schools?"

# CITIZENSHIP

## STEM luncheon feeds off Teacher of the Year's keynote

From the personable humanoid robot to the dynamic presentation from the National Teacher of the Year, the Enumclaw Schools Foundation, Enumclaw Rotary Foundation and Enumclaw School District's "Spirit of Innovation" community luncheon Jan. 30 hit its mark.

The luncheon, which takes place in conjunction with the STEM Expo at Enumclaw High School, gathers local business leaders and community members to learn more about high-tech learning and employment opportunities for Enumclaw students and the need for a skilled workforce to maintain our regional technology and manufacturing base. STEM is an acronym for the fields of study in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

It was hard not to get into the spirit with NAO, a 2-foot tall humanoid robot winking and blinking his bright blue eyes at the crowd from the stage at the city of Enumclaw's field house. Brad Schneider of DEPCO ran NAO, of Aldabaran Robotics, through a quick demonstration. NAO and others like him are widely used for academic purposes worldwide. Schneider noted one example where the University of Notre Dame is using humanoid robots to teach autistic children how to interact.



Brad Schneider and NAO greeted the STEM luncheon audience.

NAO was a scene-stealer, but in a keynote address laced with humor and humility, Zillah High School's Jeffrey Charbonneau wowed the crowd as well.

As the 2013 National Teacher of the Year, Charbonneau has been out of the classroom since June 1, 2013, racking up 170,000 frequent flier miles speaking in this country and around the world.

Charbonneau was selected as the best at his job from the 3.3 million teachers in the United States. But he will tell you he is no more special than any of those millions of other teachers.



"I'm a good teacher, but I'm not the best teacher," he said. Zillah is a school of about 400 students in the Yakima Valley town of 2,500 by the same name, where Charbonneau himself graduated in 1996. At Zillah High, he teaches advanced, college-level chemistry, physics and engineering and is part of the teaching team for yearbook, drama leader and student government. He laughs at the craziness, but says they are all connected.

"Yearbook layout is a science, believe it or not," and he heads into an abbreviated explanation of how the two are intertwined.

When he spoke to the more than 125 guests at the luncheon, it was easy to see how his students easily relate to him and engage in what he is teaching.

"It's about building student relationships and understanding them as people," he says. Once that's built, he said, he adapts his lessons to the way each student learns. "It's relationships above all else."

Charbonneau also believes it is important students fail at the right time. "Unless they're failing at some point I'm not pushing them hard enough," he said, and the key is to be right there at that time to lift them up so they know how to respond to adversity.

Hearing, "No," is also important, because when you hear no, he said, it encourages you to come up with answers and solve problems.

"We are teaching our kids about courage no matter what they do," he said.

"Teaching is about overcoming obstacles," he said. "We help our kids identify them and overcome them."

He said teachers help students overcome obstacles through legacy, encouraging citizenship, teaching them to be self-sufficient and solve problems and building courage and confidence.

"It's not what I'm doing in Zillah. It's not what's happening in Enumclaw. It can look a million different ways," Charbonneau said, posing the question, "What will you do next to support your schools?"

Enumclaw School District Superintendent Mike Nelson replied by saying they are moving forward with STEM initiatives.

"We will continue our rapid expansion of STEM programs throughout our K-12 system in both program offerings and key partnerships with businesses and outside organizations," Nelson said. "We are well on our way to building a first class STEM program for students in the Enumclaw School District!"

Since last year's STEM community luncheon, the district launched an aerospace manufacturing and the Aerospace Joint Apprenticeship Committee (AJAC) program at Enumclaw High School; introduced Project Lead the Way, a hands-on, project-based program at the elementary and middle school levels; created robotics teams at the elementary and middle school levels to enhance the teams already established at the high school and, this fall will expand its science and math Advanced Placement classes.

"STEM is a big deal here," said Alan Burke, deputy superintendent for the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, who also spoke briefly at the luncheon. "It's amazing to watch the support here. Enumclaw is an outstanding school district and an outstanding community. It's all positive."



Alan Burke from OSPI and Jeffrey Charbonneau