

# OUTLOOK

## Soldier's son, volunteer forge friendship

### *Face to Face program matches adult mentors with fifth-graders*

BY ROB CULLIVAN

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**As her husband, Army Reserve Master Sgt. Patrick O'Halloran, prepared to deploy to Iraq a second time last January, Angela O'Halloran says she was concerned her son, Eamonn, 11, wouldn't have Dad around.**

Sitting in the family living room, Angela notes Eamonn lives with her as well as with four sisters, and she wanted a "strong male adult" in her son's life.

"So we settled on Claudio," her husband – home on leave – says dryly, as the room erupts in laughter.

Claudio Grandjean, a Gresham police sergeant, takes the ribbing well as he talks about his friendship with Eamonn, a sixth-grader at Dexter McCarty Middle School in the Gresham-Barlow School District. Grandjean met Eamonn when the boy was a fifth-grader at West Gresham Elementary School because the policeman is a mentor with Metropolitan Family Service's Face to Face Project, which matches Gresham-Barlow fifth-graders with adult volunteers.

The father of three grown sons, Grandjean says he's had fun bonding with Eamonn, whom he meets twice a week at school. He's gone to the boy's school events, taken him on group outings with other mentors and children to watch the Portland Trail Blazers and has graciously suffered losses in video basketball games to Eamonn.

"Even though my kids have all grown up, I think I still have something to offer to a young man," Grandjean says.

"Eamonn will talk about Claudio – he looks forward to that interaction," Angela adds.

### Home front

Patrick is home on emergency leave from Iraq until the end of next week because Eamonn suffered a broken jaw and nose, among other injuries, in a bike accident a few weeks back. Father and son have been enjoying their time together as Eamonn recovers, the boy said, "watching movies and hanging out."

Grandjean notes he particularly wanted to help the O'Hallorans because Patrick was in Iraq – not to mention Grandjean's buddy, Gresham Police Sgt. Bill Smith, is also serving in the reserve in Baghdad at the U.S. embassy with O'Halloran. Soldiers' families bear the brunt of their absence, Grandjean says, and the community needs to recognize that sacrifice.

"It's more than putting a sticker on your car that says 'Support your troops,' " he adds.

### Face to Face

Face to Face volunteers such as Grandjean meet with the children twice weekly at school for at least one year. Matches are made with children whose families believe they need support for one reason or another, according to Brendon Bassett, Face to Face coordinator.



JIM CLARK / THE OUTLOOK

Eamonn O'Halloran, center, plays "Hoops Lite" on an iTouch belonging to his mentor, Gresham police Sgt. Claudio Grandjean, second from left, while his mother Angela, right, watches and his father Patrick, left, talks with Grandjean. Patrick O'Halloran, who is home on leave from Iraq, wanted a positive male role model for his son while he is serving in Baghdad.

particularly focuses on fifth-graders because they're about to go to middle school, a time when many students have difficulty staying "connected at school."

Patrick O'Halloran notes he wanted Eamonn to have a male role model while he was away precisely because the boy was going to be in middle school.

"(Grandjean) can empathize with the problems of being a boy," O'Halloran says.

"Moms are good to a point, but there has to be that male bonding," Angela adds.

### **Finding volunteers**

Currently there are 13 male and female mentors working with 13 students in the school district, Bassett says, and Face to Face is about to match 12 new mentors with students as well.

The program is seeking more volunteers, Bassett adds. Folks interested in mentoring must undergo a criminal background check and provide at least three references, he says, noting his agency also interviews volunteers about their skills and hobbies in order to best match mentor and child.

The rewards for volunteering include a smile on a child's face and a chance to make a difference, Bassett says.

"It's a simple but effective way for people to have a positive impact on a child's life."

### **Volunteers needed**

- Metropolitan Family Service's Face to Face Project seeks adult volunteers to mentor students in the Gresham-Barlow School District. Mentors commit to two, one-hour meetings a week for at least one year. The agency is also seeking volunteers for such activities as after-school programs, older adult programs and one-time events.

For more information, call Brendon Bassett at 503-970-8409, e-mail [brendonb@metfamily.org](mailto:brendonb@metfamily.org) or visit [www.metfamily.org](http://www.metfamily.org).