

# Tualatin is Moving Full STEAM Ahead for \$3 Million

BY SARA SINGER

Celebrations were erupting in communities across the country last month as Tualatin and seven other cities were named as finalists in the America's Best Communities (ABC) competition, sponsored by Frontier Communications. Each of these communities will receive \$100,000 to begin bringing their Community Revitalization Plans to life. The Tualatin ABC Team sent a delegation to the East coast for the ABC Summit to represent the community and present Tualatin's plan to a panel of judges. Members Mayor Lou Ogden, John Bartholomew from Mask & Mirror Community Theatre and Bethany Wurtz from the Tualatin Tomorrow Vision Advisory Committee delivered a passionate pitch and answered questions from the judges about Tualatin's Community Revitalization Plan which was developed as part of the quarter-finalist round of the competition.

Tualatin's Community Revitalization Plan focuses on increasing opportunity and the standard of living for everyone in the community through advancing STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) education. About one-third of Tualatin's families struggle in poverty, and nearly half of elementary students receive free or reduced lunch. These students have the same opportunity as their more affluent classmates, but they do not always enjoy the same access. The ABC initiative is hyper-focused on connecting ALL youth to STEAM education and CTE training that align with

Tualatin's advanced manufacturing industry base. The ABC Team believes the pathway out of poverty is paved with education, skills training and the wayfinding that comes with mentoring. The "A" in STEAM is important because research indicates the Arts enhances the learning experience by creating an environment where students explore the subjects of science, technology, engineering and math through experiential learning.

This plan is based on the Tualatin Tomorrow community vision, and was developed with ideas from the community, students, local businesses, the Tualatin Chamber, the City of Tualatin, the South Metro-Salem STEM Partnership, Tigard-Tualatin School District, World of Speed and others to provide all kids with hands-on learning which will build pathways to future career opportunities.

In the short-term Tualatin plans to build a mobile makerspace enabling students to create, build, and enjoy hands-on learning. Makerspaces are interdisciplinary innovation spaces dedicated to the art and science of manufacturing goods. The mobile makerspace will be scaled to serve students K-12 with special emphasis on elementary and middle school, girls, and minorities. Its unique attribute is mobility. It will literally roll to wherever the kids are; schools, neighborhoods, and community events, to maximize utilization. The team is working with employers to acquire equipment to outfit a trailer with computers for multimedia

and CAD, 3D printers, various tools and equipment that will connect kids to the latest technology. Initial funding will be from the ABC award and local commitments.

Longer-term, Tualatin intends to supplement the mobile maker space with a permanent Community Career and Creative Center. The Center would provide space to add larger maker equipment, conduct classes and workshops and integrate performing arts.

More than 350 communities nationwide entered the competition after its launch in 2014, and 50 were selected as quarterfinalists in April 2015, and this was narrowed to 15 semi-finalists in January 2016.

The America's Best Communities finalists are: Lake Havasu City, Arizona; Statesboro, Georgia; Valley County/Meadows Valley, Idaho; Chisago Lakes Area, Minnesota; Huntington, West Virginia; Darrington/Arlington, Washington; Tualatin, Oregon; and Madison, Indiana. Sponsored by Frontier Communications, DISH Network, CoBank and The Weather Channel, the America's Best Communities competition has dedicated \$10 million in prizes and other support to spark economic revitalization in small towns and rural communities across the country.

In April 2017, the top three communities making the largest impact and showing the greatest potential for achieving sustainable revitalization will be selected as the grand prize



Artist Renderings of Tualatin's Mobile Makerspace. The mobile unit will be outfitted with CAD, 3D printers and various tools and equipment designed to allow students to create, build, and enjoy hands-on learning.

winners. The first place community will receive \$3 million, the second place community \$2 million, and \$1 million for third.

The Tualatin ABC Team is already working on their plans to get the mobile makerspace up and running for next school year.



**Sara Singer** is Vice President for J Robertson and Company, a consulting firm specializing in community building and public engagement. She serves as the "coach" for the Tualatin ABC Team and is excited to assist them in achieving their community vision.



Mayor Lou Ogden, John Bartholomew and Bethany Wurtz.