

# Educator Recipient



**Tori Hamacheck**

**T**ori Hamacheck is a student support specialist at Forest Hills Elementary School. She was born and raised in Lake Oswego. After receiving her M.A. in Teaching, with an English Speakers of Other Language endorsement, Tori launched her teaching career in Sherwood, Oregon. Five years later, she returned to her roots and became a teacher at Forest Hills. With a love for learning, Tori completed her Principal License at Lewis and Clark in 2021. She now is the Student Support Specialist

at Forest Hills and the Vice President of the Lake Oswego Educator Association.

Tori has always been a friend to neurodiverse individuals and started volunteering with Young Life Capernaum in 2016. For several years, in her spare time, she worked with this tight-knit community group of teens and young adults. At age 22, they aged out of the organization. Tori recognized the need for ongoing support and connection for these older individuals and decided to create a group with a similar goal, but for people of all ages. Working with parents, community members, and volunteer leaders, Tori founded a non-profit called Common Grounds two years ago. In doing so, she created a community for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities who had aged out of the previous program. At their get-togethers, they play games, have rich group discussions about matters near and dear to the members, build community, and connect with each other.

In her own words, “the Common Grounds Thursday gatherings are a highlight in my week. In my spare time you’ll find me working on DIY home projects with my fiancée Tyler Elliott, wedding planning, snuggling my baby niece, and digging around my ever-expanding garden.”