



Washington State Senate

Olympia Office:

412 Legislative Building
PO Box 40403
Olympia, WA 98504-0403
Phone: (360) 786-7604

Senator Andy Billig

Deputy Majority Leader
3rd Legislative District

District Office:

25 W. Main Ave. Suite #237
Spokane, WA 99201
Phone: (509) 209-2427
E-mail: Andy.Billig@leg.wa.gov

April 13, 2018

Spokane Public Schools Board of Directors

Susan Chapin, President
Jerrall Haynes, Vice President
Michael Wiser
Brian Newberry
Deana Brower
Lili Gondry, Student Advisor
Emmett Linklater, Student Advisor

Dr. Shelley Redinger
Spokane Public Schools
200 N. Bernard
Spokane, WA 99201

Dear Spokane School Board Directors, Student Advisors and Superintendent Redinger:

I was pleased to hear of your plans for the construction of a new middle school and would like to request this school be named after a local hero, Carla Peperzak.

Carla, as a 16 year old Jewish member of the Dutch resistance during World War Two, demonstrated extreme courage while she saved lives and provided aid to those being persecuted by the Nazis during their occupation of the Netherlands. Holland had one of the highest Jewish death rates of Western Europe in World War II; only about 35,000 of the 140,000 Jews in Holland survived. Carla helped hide approximately 40 Jews from the Germans during WWII and protected scores of others while working in the Underground movement. She secured hiding places in attics, basements, and barns, and provided food and medical supplies to her charges, often biking long distances across rural Holland in this effort. Once, she rescued her young nephew from a train headed for a Nazi detention center by dressing as a German nurse and convincing the German officers that the boy needed medical attention. Despite the extreme risk, Carla frequently put her own life on the line and acted selflessly and bravely to save her fellow Dutch citizens.

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Carla became a citizen of the United States in 1958 and moved to Spokane in 2004. She has been a frequent public speaker, helping to educate our community, particularly students, about the Holocaust.

Carla's heroic efforts and colorful story has been told in The Spokesman-Review and other media outlets. In addition, the Washington State Senate passed a resolution in honor of Carla in 2015. That resolution included the following passage:

"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Washington State Senate honor and recognize Carla Olman Peperzak as a selfless and brave hero, who saved the lives of many and is now using her experiences to speak to new generations and educate us all about our history and the human capacity to care for others while facing unimaginably difficult challenges."

I believe naming a middle school for Carla is appropriate to honor her heroism and service. It is vital to continue to tell the story of the Holocaust to future generations and seems particularly fitting to tell that story to middle school students through the lens of a teenage hero who ended up living right here in our own community.

I urge the Spokane Public School Board to take action to name the new middle school in honor of Carla Peperzak. Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your leadership on behalf of our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy Billig". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Andy Billig