

GRESHAM, OR
Mayor Shane Bemis

CELEBRATING COMPASSION THROUGH PUBLIC ART

Thirty years ago, when they were together in high school, Shane Bemis was Todd Kirnan's special education student assistant. Today, Shane Bemis is Mayor of Gresham and Todd Kirnan is a hero of sorts, not for rushing into burning buildings and saving lives, but for being a constant force of positive energy and humanity in his city on a daily basis.

Mr. Kirnan, who suffers from autism, runs a delivery service in downtown Gresham. Local merchants phone him with their take-out delivery orders for coffee, documents – whatever the needs of their businesses might be. He routinely volunteers for and completes favors for people when he sees that something needs to be done. Shopkeepers tip generously, and Todd spends 10 or more hours a day walking the streets of downtown, telling everyone he passes, "You're nice!" or "You're awesome!" or "Have a nice day!" and laughingly referring to them by nicknames that he invents and distributes generously.

Over the years, Todd became a fixture in the city's downtown, brightening days and racking up thousands of close friends – Mr. Gresham, they call him. One day, Mayor Bemis and those close friends got together and decided to do something audacious to honor him: They commissioned a life-size bronze statue of Todd, the \$55,000 cost funded entirely by community donations which came in rapidly and enthusiastically. In September 2018, the statue was placed on Main Street, in the heart of Gresham's downtown. Along with this, Mayor Bemis and the City threw a parade and celebration in Todd's honor, with thousands of people crowding the city center to take part. It's said that, on that day, there wasn't a dry eye in Gresham. The events were covered in [local](#) and [national](#) news stories that Gresham officials say carried the optimism and compassion that Todd represents to millions of people in Oregon and across the country.

Additional information is available from Ashley Miller, Assistant to the Mayor, at ashley.miller@greshamoregon.gov, or 503-618-2584.