

PHOENIX RISING

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Nelson wears many hats at Phoenix

By Anna Lock
Phoenix Rising staff

Mr. Clay Nelson is living proof of the adage, if you want something done, give it to a busy person.

Nelson, a 50-year-old math teacher, started working at Phoenix Middle School when he was 22, so he has been here for 28 years. He attended Fenimore High School and then went to college at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

He is an algebra teacher and the math team leader for eighth grade, an athletic director, a student council leader, a coach to various sports, and a supporter of the Phoenix Rising newspaper.

“It is great Phoenix has a newspaper and young writers have the opportunity to get experience writing articles of interest,” said Nelson, explaining why he helps out with the paper when needed. (He wrote an article on flag football for the last edition.)

Another thing he does is coach sports, with his favorite sports to coach being soccer and wrestling. Overall, at Delavan-Darien High School he coached the boys varsity soccer team, varsity wrestling, and junior varsity football. At the middle school, he has coached wrestling, flag football and track.

He accepted these positions at Phoenix, because “I accepted the job at Delavan when I had just turned 22. The position was an opportunity to teach eighth grade and be the varsity wrestling coach at the high school and these were two things I wanted to do.”

Nelson has observations about sports over the years at Phoenix. “The sports at Phoenix primarily remain the same as they were 28 years ago,” he said. “One major difference is the flag football program. In the early 1990’s we had approximately 70 people out for flag football. The numbers in the program changed when the city began to offer the tackle football program, which is now known as the Junior Comets.”

When younger, Nelson also did many sports, including football, wrestling, track and cross country in high school. In college, he focused on wrestling.

But, before all of his sports assignments, and other jobs at Phoenix, he considered other career options.

“When I was in eighth grade I wanted to be an FBI agent. As an adult, I have also considered doing financial planning. I also sold real estate with Century 21 and Shorewest Realty for eight



Clay Nelson

years,” said Nelson.

While achieving his many dreams, Nelson also faced many challenges and hardships.

“Life will definitely have its challenges, but it is how we respond to those challenges that matters. When life throws you a challenge, then find something positive to focus on,” said Nelson. “I find my schedule is very busy. In order to succeed with all the activities I will make a list of the things I need to get done and then prioritize. I believe goal setting is very important.

“Ever since I was in high school I have set short-term, intermediate and long-term goals and I continue to do this today.”

One of his duties is as a student council leader. “This is my second year doing student council with Mrs. Timmerman and I really enjoy the college tours we take with the Leadership Students in the spring,” he said.

As a student council leader, some of Nelson’s responsibilities consist of canteen schedules, field trip planning, like the Rake ‘n Run, and the end-of-the-year college field trip. Along with these many responsibilities, when Nelson has time to relax, he enjoys many things in his free time, including “lifting weights, listening to music, kayaking, spending time with family (and) swimming.”

Peer Helpers make Phoenix a better place



Peer Helpers. All of the eighth-grade Peer Helpers gathered Oct. 23, 2017, for Red Ribbon Week.

By Ryan Flitcroft
Phoenix Rising staff

Why are Peer Helpers needed? Why are they wanted? Why are they important? What even is a peer helper? Who are they? Those are questions you may ask.

Well, Peer Helpers are a group of students from Phoenix Middle School that ranges from sixth grade to eighth grade. They help out with many activities, such as parent-teacher conferences, snack

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Peer Helpers...

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shack, awareness days like Red Ribbon Week, Cancer Awareness Day and more. But this school year is very different. The Peer Helpers are doing a lot more. For Red Ribbon Week, instead of the teachers and staff making up the days, the Peer Helpers made them up!

But that's not why Peer Helpers is great; it's because they help students. For example, if someone is new to the school, the group will help them get around and find their classes and make them feel welcome.



Steve Gross

The Peer Helpers is run by a great leader, counselor Mr. Steve Gross. Asked if there was any group before Peer Helpers, Gross said, "In 2014, when I started working at Phoenix, they told me I was taking over the Peer Helper program, so I was happy about that, and when I took over, I got informed that they met once a month and only did a few things. Which, to answer your question, yes there was something but not as big."

He added, "So I brought in peer-shadow, rake-and-run, Red Ribbon Week and all the awareness days. I brought those in to not only help, but to teach you that you are more, and that you can make good volunteers."

Gross was asked what his goals were for Peer Helpers. "To show you can be dreamers and for people to reach to the stars," he replied.

Gross was also asked if he planned to make Peer Helpers a district-wide program or at least to the high-school level.

PHOENIX RISING

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"Everyday I fight for it. They have something for 10th graders to 12th graders, but nothing in ninth grade, which I want to change," he said.

(Advisor's note: Ryan Flitcroft, an eighth-grade student, is a member of Peer Helpers.)

Courage retreat proves to be very inspiring

By Anna Lock
Phoenix Rising staff

The courage retreat, which took place on Nov. 29 at Phoenix Middle School, was an uplifting experience, with help from the Youth Frontiers organization, Phoenix staff, and high school students, who led groups.

The day started off with some fun icebreaker games, including mondo volleyball, and get across the gym. Then, as the day progressed, the seventh-grade students dug deeper into the subject of courage and how fear affects courage. For example, they explained to us that everyone has fear and, with fear, you can either follow the crowd or "do you".

Students also learned that sometimes it is hard to be you, because you are scared of what other people will think of you. Later, there was an activity where you had to go under the jump rope, while two people were twirling it; once you got to the other side it was like the "golden side," and if you messed up, or the rope hit you, everyone had to start the game over. The purpose of this activity was supposed to teach the fear used to make it over the rope, and the fear of what people will say or do if we didn't make it over.

After that activity, the leaders from Youth Frontiers told students a story about a time when they didn't use courage to do the right thing because they were so scared about what others would say. They said that today, when they look back on those times, they don't feel scared; rather, they feel ashamed that they didn't stand up and help.

Continuously throughout the day, students also divided into small groups with the Delavan-Darien High School leaders. In these groups, answers to questions about bullying, courage and the students themselves were discussed. There also were some fun competitions with student groups.

A part of the retreat that really stood out was the three things they told the seventh graders they need to do. They were to stand up, be yourself, and make a change. It was very inspiring to hear their stories and ideas about courage at Phoenix.

To end the day, there was an activity where everyone wrote down an act of courage and why they choose that. Then, there was a bowl of water representing a pond, and some stones, which, when dropped in the water, caused a ripple effect. That spread all throughout the pond. If you wanted to, one by one, students could go up and say their acts of courage into the microphone, and drop a stone in the water, to represent a ripple effect in the school.

So, the pond was really supposed to represent Phoenix and the stones that were placed showed how acts of courage affect the school.

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OPINION PAGE

Opinion: How to become friends with a new student

By Lily Wettstein
Phoenix Rising staff

Have you ever noticed a student at school wandering around, looking lost or is new to the school? You should try to become friends with them so they aren't lonely all school-year long. There are multiple ways to become friends with a new student, but you also have to listen to your heart for what you should do.

If you notice a new student is lost in the building and can't find his or her way to classes or the other parts of the building, like the lunchroom, library and office, you should help them out by showing them where it is, even it means you are late to class. It would also help if you had the same class or classes with the student, so you could show him or her where it is.

Let's say you have to do a project or activity and you need to make a group, but the new student is standing by himself/herself, so you could let the student be in your group. The school could have some activities and clubs going on and you are part of one, so you could encourage them to join so they could get to know other students and become friends with them.

If you showed the new student where the lunchroom is and you go to your table right away, instead of sitting with your friends, sit with him or her during lunch so the person isn't alone or invite the student to sit with you and your friends.

Another way to become friends with the new student is to find out

what you have in common with him or her. Once you find out what you have in common, you can figure out how well you and him or her will be as friends. You could always comment on their appearance as well, so they don't feel like they don't fit in. Also, give the new student space so he or she can fit in with due time.

These are all ways to become friends with a new student who is new to the district. He or she could be lost, lonely and scared at school. If you notice a new student that is lost or confused, you could help the student now and become friends with him or her, so you can be very nice toward the person. Try these methods and see how well it goes, since I experienced it this school year. Good luck!

Students' views something to chew on

By Zabrya Russell
Phoenix Rising staff

How are things going in the Delavan-Darien School District and at Phoenix Middle School? A couple of students recently offered their opinions, and gave something to chew on.

"The district is very good," said Joane Russell. "Something I like about the district is that there (are) people working together to form a good district for the students, which is good. But one of the policies that I wish that we could change is (to) have gum in our classes, except gym and music class."

Emma Graska enjoys the freedom she has found at Phoenix. "(I like) that we get freedom and we get to walk in the halls alone," said Graska about what helps inspire her in middle school as she became a sixth grader this school year.

Graska said things are going well in school. She agreed about being able to have gum in school.

"Yes, but just in FACE class," she said at first. When asked about other classes as well, Graska said, "Yeah, and other classes, except gym and music."

Sixth-grade basketball is cancelled

By Emily Lock
Phoenix Rising staff

Did you know that sixth-grade basketball was cancelled? Well, it was, but why? Mr. Clay Nelson is the athletic director at Phoenix Middle School and he was asked why the basketball program for sixth grade was cancelled.

"The coach from last year resigned this summer. The district posted the job on September 12th and, as of mid-November, there were no applicants," explained Nelson.

"Mr. Schmelz (the principal) and I needed to make a decision so we could communicate with the scheduled officials and table workers. Since there were no applicants for the coaching position,

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Courage retreat...

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Anna Lock's opinion: My act of courage was to be myself, and I choose that because I learned it is important to do what is important to you. A lot of seventh-grade students, and even high school students, went up and cast their stones, along with saying their acts of courage.

I was really inspired by all of the people who went up and their acts of courage. The leaders reminded us what we did today applies to every day, and the act of courage we made should be a constant reminder of something we try to improve daily. This whole experience was really amazing and inspiring. I think it changed a lot of people's perspective, including mine. To conclude, I would have to say the 2017 Phoenix Courage Retreat was an inspiring and successful day.

Review: 'Wonder' inspires as movie and book

By Anna Lock

Phoenix Rising staff

The film "Wonder" that came out on Nov. 17, 2017, was a great, inspiring film - and a sad film. It was based on the novel that came



out Feb. 14, 2012. The movie made \$346.1 million (at the time of this writing), and has sold out in many theaters.

In my opinion, the film was uplifting, has a good lesson to be learned, and a great movie to see with

family. The movie plot consists of a boy and his family who face many challenges, and it is very inspiring for anyone.

However, I would have to say that I was not as impressed with the movie as I was with the book. The book has a lot more characters' perspectives and details, but I would say both the movie and the book are excellent.

Some of the main characters are August Pullman (Auggie), who is played by Jacob Tremblay; Jack Will, who is played by Noah Jupe; Via (Auggie's sister), who is played by Izabela Vidovic; and Julian, who is played by Bryce Gheisar. These are just some of the many cast members in the film.

The movie also has direct quotes from the book, which I thought was pretty neat. Also if you like the "Star Wars" films, Chewbacca is also in some scenes of the movie, because Auggie loves "Star Wars."

To conclude the book and movie "Wonder" are both inspiring and may leave you with tears in your eyes.

Review: 'Broadway in Chicago' impressive

By Anna Lock

Phoenix Rising staff

Don't feel like driving all the way to New York to enjoy the

Broad way experience? Well, you don't have to with "Broadway in Chicago"! "Broadway in Chicago",



which was created in 2000, offers many different shows, including "Wicked", "Hamilton", "Potted Potter", "Dear Evan Hansen", "Hairspray", "Cinderella" and many more, that are just as good as in New York.

One of the musicals I have seen in Chicago is "Wicked." Some things I really enjoyed were the live performance itself, the soundtrack, the players in the pit, and the amazing, and comical, acting. I also really enjoyed the backdrops, sound effects, and the theatre itself.

There are five different theaters in Chicago and they all rotate what shows they will be playing. The theatre I went to was the Oriental Theatre, but there is also the Cadillac Palace Theatre, CIBC Theatre, Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University, and Broadway Playhouse at Water Tower Place.

I was really amazed by the people playing instruments in the pit

because, if they mess up, the whole show could be off.

About 1.7 million people attend the shows annually. Typically, the shows run a little over two hours, but they have an intermission in between. According to many local reviews, the theatres are beautiful, the staff is respectful, and the audio quality is great. If you would like to learn more about "Broadway in Chicago", check out this link <http://www.broadwayinchicago.com/>.

Column: How I 'spent' my winter break

By Zach Miller

Phoenix Rising staff

My winter break was exciting as it included my birthday party. During my party at Chuck E Cheese, it was very busy keeping everybody happy. The guests were Timmy, Nadia, Charlotte, Alex and Lauren. Each person received a game card to play games.

Then I had cheese cake! That was so good. I also had cheese pizza. Then I had to pick for the ticket blaster and the winner was Timmy. There were a lot of tickets - Timmy got 500 of them. We took a group picture, which was cramped, but at least we got it. We made copies of it. Each party guest received a balloon.

My favorite time was getting presents. I got \$126 in gift cards! That was cool.

A few days later, I went to Family Dollar. I got a high-tech antenna. I thought it would be great on my TV, but nothing came through. But my mom let me use hers. Then I got a telescope, which was in a beat-up box. However, inside it was in good condition. I also got batteries, since I need them all the time. The last thing I got was a drone with a camera for \$50. I was excited because it would be cool for future videos I could make.

After searching a few stores, I found a fitbit kit with my two favorite colors, which was cool. Then me and my mom went to out for dinner. Back home, I set everything up. The next day, I got two gingerbread houses while shopping with grandma. There was one more Spiderman chair also. My brother, Seth, loved it. Two days later, I got a printer. I used it to make copies of the Chuck E Cheese photo. That was a cool item to get.

On Christmas morning, at my mom's house, I got a Jumanji game. That was very great. I also got a remote-control car that looked like a jeep. Then i went to dad's house and got a DVD case, so now I can store all of my DVDs. Two days later, i went to McDonald's, where it was amazing how many toppings were on my ice cream. It was very yummy. Next was a stop at Dollar Tree, where I got cool stuff.

By New Year's Eve, I stayed up and I was very tired. The next day? More cheesecake! With \$20 left, I went to a store once again and bought a cool nerf gun with a viewfinder. I also got nerf bullets with a range of 90 feet.

Next year, I am going to save my money for something a lot cooler!

Basketball cancelled...

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we cancelled the season," added Nelson.

Nelson added he didn't have a choice because no one signed up for basketball.

However, Nelson had a positive note. "Mr. Foster and I are coaching sixth-grade volleyball and that season starts in mid-March," he said.

Pioneering: How does it all begin?

By Thom Aiello

Phoenix Rising and Cometeer Advisor



When I was a little kid, I would sit in my dad's barbershop and draw lines on pieces of paper. Then, within those lines, I would make up headlines and write stories in ink underneath the headlines. Most were humorous pieces, or at least they were intended to be funny. My cousin would also join me in doing that when we would get together.

Maybe I was inspired by the daily newspapers delivered to dad's shop. My grandfather also shared the shop and his more elderly male customers would encourage me to help them look at the horse racing charts in the Chicago Tribune. Some of the men would then head out to the race

tracks at places like Arlington Park in Arlington Heights, Ill., to make some wagers.

My elementary school, St. James in Kenosha, also produced a newspaper. Down the road from the school was the Kenosha News, a daily newspaper published by Howard J. Brown, a distinguished customer of my father's barbershop. If Brown noticed an article of mine in the school paper, he would send me a congratulatory note. That can mean a lot to a young student.

During a recent luncheon following the funeral of a friend's mother, one of his relatives who was a teacher at Tremper High School in Kenosha came over to chat with me. Noting the newspaper careers of myself and my friend, Chuck Salituro, as well as others, the former teacher mentioned how proud Mrs. Ferne Hoeft would be of her former journalism students. Salituro, the former sports editor of the Milwaukee Journal, has been a senior news editor at ESPN for years. My cousin, Joe Fumo, was a newspaper reporter before becoming a freelance writer, including doing technical writing for some major corporations. Another from our high school newspaper staff, Doris Grimes, worked for years for a Chicago TV station, including being behind the scenes of Oprah Winfrey's early Chicago television show, A.M. Chicago. Hoeft's son, who attended Bradford High School in Kenosha, later worked with me when I was the sports editor of a daily newspaper in Manitowoc, and he then moved on to the bigger newspaper in Green Bay. There were many others who had accomplished careers after being a part of the Tremper newspaper and yearbook staffs.

It was during that time in high school that I decided to write a letter to the editor to the Kenosha News regarding news reports about the number of soldiers killed in the war in Viet Nam. Brown called me to confirm the letter and then it was published. A former Kenoshan, Leonard Iaquina, worked at a "think tank" in New York City, as I recall, and he saw my letter and contacted me. We continued communicating by mail as he encouraged my journalistic aspirations. (He liked that a high school student would write a letter questioning whether the numbers reported were accurate.) So that is how it all began for me. Being an advisor for the Phoenix Rising and for the Delavan-Darien High School Cometeer is one way it is continuing. (This column's name, Pioneering, has been with me since my collegiate days. My lofty goal was to "pioneer" new ideas through my columns.)

All of that being said, what will it take to inspire you to be involved with the newspaper clubs at the two schools?

This is a real opportunity for students. As written before, the

newspaper is your "voice," a way to express yourself, to be heard, and to highlight what is going on in school and who are the people who should be recognized. It is also open to school staff. If you want to get something out to other students and/or the public, this is a source for you.

There has been some really good feedback from the public regarding the papers, which are seen online and are part of the school district's Website. Some of the feedback, including story ideas, has come from current students, some from alumni and even former members of the Cometeer staff or student writers from when I was the editor of the Delavan Enterprise and had a strong group of D-DHS students contributing to an award-winning production.

An issue is that we need more contributors, especially at D-DHS. Some students express interest, but now we need them to get involved. It is not very hard. If a person can't make meetings (generally every two weeks in the Phoenix library, with beverages and snacks as perks), he or she can communicate with me through email, at thomaiello@gmail.com.

The biggest thing I hear from some students who are reluctant to get involved is they do not feel they have the time. Honestly, that drives me a little bit crazy. If a person did one article a quarter in the school year (which correlates to our goal of trying to publish once a quarter), we're talking about probably no more than two hours a quarter. Just take a little break from social media or such one day or two every month or so, and you'll have recognition that lasts a lifetime. Seems like a good deal, right?

Then, someday, you may be telling people how it all began for you!

Monster Bash a smashing success

By Ethan Kraayeveld and Camden Lockhart

Phoenix Rising staff

Many people went to the Monster Bash at Phoenix Middle School. Some older kids from high school even came to help with the dance. There was a costume contest, won by Peyton Marshall as a jester. Second place went to Delilah Aranda as a Day of the Dead Princess, and third place went to Ethan Baca as a dinosaur.

Mrs. Stickney, who helped with the dance, said, "The costumes were fun to see. All the kids looked great!" There was no common costume because about 50-plus people didn't wear a costume.

So you might be wondering how many people went to the dance. Attendance was estimated at more than 150 people.

"Halloween was fun with the middle schoolers," said Mr. Schmelz, principal.

"The dance was awesome! I loved the creative costumes," said Mrs. Timmerman.

Checking with some people at the food stand produced some interesting numbers. They said they sold about 15 pizzas, about seven cases of soda, and two boxes of chips.

"The dance is pretty fun," said Camden Lockhart. Jesus Vasquez said, "The place is fine." Tyler Justus said, "The dance was very fun!" And Fernando Diaz said, "The party is good."

At the end of the night, more than \$575 was raised, with more than \$100 from food and \$475 just from the entry fee.

LIKE TO WRITE?



It's Never
Too Late
To Get Involved
and
Contribute
to Either

The Phoenix Rising or The D-DHS Cometeer

If Interested,
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