

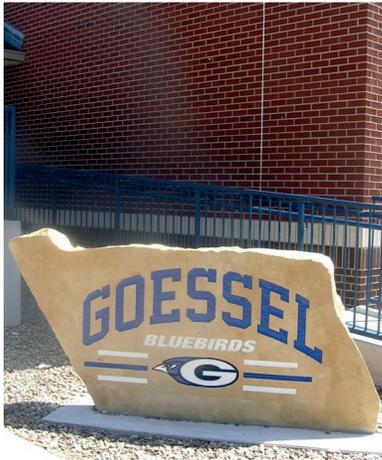


The Bluebird

A Publication for the Alumni of Goessel High School

Volume 8 Number 2

Summer - 2020



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WHO ARE YOU LIVING WITH?

Who are you living with and how do you pronounce your name may well be two of the first questions foreign exchange students are asked throughout the first month of school.

Goessel has had a foreign exchange program for quite some time, actually probably longer than most people realize.

The first exchange student who became a part of the junior class at Goessel wasn't from another country but instead came from Mississippi. Carol Thomas was invited to come to Goessel in 1964 by Ernie and Rose Voth who were doing service work at Camp Landon Mennonite Mission in Gulfport, Mississippi. Since Carol's boyfriend had just entered the army and was deployed to Germany, she decided to accept the offer. This must have been a culture shock as an African American coming to live in a small conservative Mennonite community in Goessel in the mid sixties.

Finding this piece of information challenged me to find out more about the arrangements of this situation. Earlier this summer, I located Carol and spent some time visiting with her. She commented that she had thoroughly enjoyed her time in Goessel and had fond memories of high school. Upon arriving she immediately became involved in clubs and activities. Carol started the year living with Ernie and Rose Voth. Carol lived with the Voths for the first semester. Her living arrangements changed at that point and she spent the remainder of the year at fellow classmates' homes. She stayed with Bill and Marna Abrahams, Arnold and Dorothy Schmidt, Lee and Viola Ratzlaff, Alfador and Mary Frey and Orie and Evelyn Lehrman. She joined many activities at school and church. Classmates responded that she was well liked and accepted. Rev. James Waltner, pastor at Tabor Mennonite Church responded in a letter to the organization's leader saying, "her presence in the community has been a big help to us in facing our own racial prejudices."

In 1983 Rikard Strandqvist and Mats Norden arrived from Sweden. Mats struggled with the adjustment of a small town and farm life and didn't stay the whole year. So Rikard would have been the first official foreign exchange student at Goessel.

Rikard remembers Goessel High School as a friendly, warm environment which made him feel welcome in a very short time period. He remembered a number of activities he was involved in such as the bands first performance of the piece of music honoring Captain Goessel, and also the musical, "Fiddler on the Roof." Rikard also asked about his teachers, remembering all of their names except two. Upon returning to Sweden, he finished high school and then University in 1993. Currently he is a Controller within a construction company. He and his family live in a city 10 kilometers north of Stockholm, Sweden.

In early 1988 Maynard Knepp and Carol Duerksen contacted an organization to discuss the possibilities of hosting a student. After being interviewed they were denied because they lived too far from the school. After contacting another organization they were selected to be a host family. That August a long-haired Swedish guy named Marten Olsson arrived at their rural home. He went out for basketball and because he was a senior he got to sit on the bench with the team when they won State in the basketball tournament. The following year Maynard and Carol received a profile for Gabriella Karoljei, from Sweden and they invited her to spend the next year with them. This cycle repeated itself many times. After several years of hosting foreign exchange students, Maynard and Carol were asked to be coordinators and are currently coordinators for ERDT/Share. At last count Maynard and Carol have hosted 21 students.

Over 125 foreign exchange students have entered the doors of Goessel High School, each looking forward to learn about our culture as we look forward to learn about their culture. The student body, staff, certified staff, and community benefit as these individuals become a part of our lives for a short time.

TRANSITIONS AND NEW BEGINNINGS

The 2020 school year can certainly be classified as a year of unexpected events, transitions and new beginnings for USD 411. Dr. John Fast, plus three elementary teachers submitted letters of retirement. They have a combined total of 129 years in the education field.

On December 9, Dr. John Fast submitted his letter of retirement. Dr. Fast has been an educator for 38 years. He has served in an administrator role for 23 of those years at Goessel. He began his career at Goessel in August of 1996 as grade school principal. In August of 2004 after the resignation of Glen Davis, he assumed the role of superintendent of USD 411 as well as principal of the then, K-6 building.

The Board of Education welcomed Mrs. Amanda Lowrance as the new superintendent and elementary principal at the March 9 Board of Education meeting. Mrs. Lowrance has been an Early Childhood Coordinator for USD 259, Wichita. Prior to that she was an assistant Principal at Jefferson Elementary having worked in the Wichita schools for 13 years.

The Board of Education also accepted the retirement of three elementary teachers: Ilona Abrahams, Thomas Krehbiel, and Dale Wiens.

Ilona Abrahams has taught first, second, third, fifth, and sixth grade at Goessel for 25 years. She will continue her work with the Alumni Association. Emily Gibson will be the new fifth grade teacher.

Thomas Krehbiel has taught fourth grade at Goessel for 30 years. Andrea Fish will replace Thomas as the new fourth grade teacher. She and her family live near Lehigh.

Dale Wiens has taught a total of thirty-six years. He taught five years in Hesston, eleven years in Oregon and twenty years at Goessel. Aryana Archuleta will be the new third grade teacher. She is a recent graduate of McPherson College.

Please extend a warm welcome to these individuals as they begin a new chapter in their life.

USD 411 TRANSITIONS TO CONTINUOUS PLAN OF LEARNING

On March 17, Governor Laura Kelly announced schools would be closing with the traditional method of instruction to reduce the chances of COVID-19 being transmitted. Instead of returning to the classroom after spring break, staff and administration worked effortlessly to design a new instructional model for delivery of classroom curriculum. USD 411's Continuous Plan of Learning looked different depending on age level and subject level. Plans were made for online schooling for the remainder of the year. USD 411 is 1:1 with Chromebooks for all students in grades 4-12. Teachers were able to connect with students using, Google Classroom, Meet, Zoom, video chats, email, texts, and other digital options.

Lower elementary teachers and students also used some of these options in addition to other resources. Other resources included, Study Island, Facebook, Youtube, virtual field trips, and SeeSaw. Some teachers elected to construct weekly packets that included math and reading lessons, art and music ideas, and all the supplies needed.

At the high school, students were allowed back in to pick up their personal belongings at scheduled intervals. The grade school packaged all of the students belongings into bags. These bags along with their learning packets were picked up using a drive thru delivery.

Although, this was an unexpected way to end the 2020 school year, there have been other events when USD 411 adjusted schedules.

In 1932, mumps was weaving its way through the community and many high school students were afflicted. School was not dismissed, but measures were taken to lower the rate of infection. Class rooms were fumigated and students with mumps were quarantined. Doctors ordered students who had not had the mumps to stay away from public places. Do these measures sound familiar?

All league activities except music and basketball were suspended for the rest of the year on January 16, 1941. Not because of illness but as an effort to conserve fuel and tires for the nation's defense.

It doesn't appear that school was ever canceled because of a possibility of the spread of polio. But one can assume that patrons were concerned. On January 15, 1965, 900 people received a second dose of Type 2 Sabin Polio Vaccine at the Goessel Grade School.

On January 6, 1972 school was canceled for a number of days. The majority of students were absent with the Hong Kong Flu which was classified as an influenza B virus.

A gas line break at the grade school in 2004 had administration making some hasty decisions. Grade school classes were moved to the Goessel Mennonite Church and the high school for close to a week. The leak was followed by a major snow storm and the decision was made to call off school for nearly another week.

On January 16 and 17, 2020, USD 411 canceled school because sixty-one kids were absent due to illnesses. Some areas were fumigated and all other areas were disinfected. Activities were canceled and patrons were encouraged to stay home.

USD 411 has faced some challenges throughout its history. Those challenges are a part of the foundation that continues to provide quality education for all children.



TEACHER CORNER

John Morgan began his teaching career at GHS in August of 1967. His energetic participation in school and community activities were noticed immediately. John was always ready to provide help where needed. With clear expectation for his students he quickly gained their respect as well as their efforts to be successful under his leadership.

He had a jovial sense of humor that was enjoyed by students, staff, and members of the community. Many of his students were “honored” by his well known end of the year awards. It was not unusual for John to lead teachers in a rousing cheer during pep rallies. And some individuals may even remember his short pep talk on “Morgan for Homecoming Queen.”

His teaching career and life ended with a tragic incident the spring of 1979. John’s personality and teaching style left a lasting impression on many students. His contribution as a teacher is seen in many of the students who were fortunate enough to have him as their teacher.

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