

December 2016

Since coming to Guthrie in 2012, I've learned to appreciate the vastness of the Bluejay Nation. Also, with improved travel, internet and social media, the world today is much smaller than the world of generations past. I continue to be reminded of this through occasions where people I've known for many years also have a Guthrie connection.

One such occasion happened recently with the passing of a dear friend, Joe Nelson. Joe, 67, had been in declining health for several years and certainly wasn't the spry sporting goods salesman this OSU freshman came to know in 1986. I was a student equipment manager for the OSU Men's Basketball team when I was first introduced to the man that, regardless of where my career took me, would reach out to offer any assistance possible. Whether he was brokering shoe sales at well-below market value for the Apache Warriors or selling basketballs to the Blackwell Maroons for his cost, he was always reaching out to me to offer assistance.

Upon being selected as the GPS Superintendent, I received a congratulatory call from Joe and it was then I was informed he was a proud member of the GHS Class of 1967. He found time to stop by the office where we caught up on old times and I was fortunate enough to meet his father-in-law, Ken English. It was at this meeting where Joe offered to sell the district land for the location of a new school as they were aware of our needs. We studied the land and determined the location simply didn't work for the district at this time but Joe was there again to offer his assistance. One of the first messages of congratulations I received after the bond issue passed was from Joe. More importantly, the first encouraging text I received after the first bond issue failed was also from the same friend who told me not to get frustrated and keep trying. Regardless of who he worked for or what he was selling, relationships came before financial profits. That loyalty highlights values instilled in his upbringing and Joe was always quick to credit the community of Guthrie for those values. My sincere blessings to Jenny and the rest of the family for your loss and thanks for sharing Joe with us.

As I write this, our first semester is virtually complete. We have worked to minimize issues created by the budget crisis of last spring. The cooperation with the City of Guthrie has allowed class sizes in grades 2-4 to stay below 27 which is actually much better than many school districts in our state. We will continue our diligence to protect the classroom as much as possible in hopes of an improved economy and state funding for schools.

One of the true gifts of the holiday season provided by our students are the recent band and vocal concerts. These performances feature amazing talent that has been harnessed by veteran directors Rob Blackburn and Bill Perring. Mr. Perring also drew an alternate assignment this year. With some of the cutbacks, we were faced with discontinuing vocal music for first grade students. The Guthrie teamwork came through again as Mr. Perring agreed to teach first graders in addition to his already busy schedule. He has utilized high school choir students to assist him and the results have been amazing for the students at Central Elementary. They have developed relationships with older and very talented students while gaining the wisdom of a world class vocal instructor.

As we enter the holiday season, the gift of relationships is obviously much more important than any material good. I know we are all ready for a break and may our GPS family find blessings of safety, peace and happiness in the coming days.