VFW Honors Teachers of the Year

From left: Sheryl Anderson (AJHS teacher and past honoree) Pat Smith (principal of DVES), Caerensa Klauss (Teacher of the Year in the elementary division) Lydia Henry (Teacher of the Year for the middle school category) Chad Cantrell (principal at CCJH) and VFW Commander Daniel Greene.

Each year VFW Post 7968 in Apache Junction honors teachers who have made an outstanding contribution to student learning. Caerensa Klauss received the honor for the elementary school category and Lydia Henry was chosen as the candidate for the middle school division. Caerensa was nominated by her principal, Pat Smith and Lydia was nominated by Savannah Moeller, a student in Lydia’s Honors Algebra I class. The recipients received a plaque and enjoyed a dinner reception in their honor. Congratulations to Caerensa and Lydia for this great honor and for all your tireless efforts to help the students at Apache Junction Unified School District.

A Gift for Schools

Would you like to help AJUSD with a tax credit? See page 4 to learn more.

Chalk it up to Kindness and Collaboration

The preschool and daycare classes at TLC would like to give Genie Marshall and Mike Weaver a huge thank you for the new addition of a chalkboard to the playground. Genie donated the board Mike installed it. Thanks to the both of these awesome volunteers. Whether you are a teacher who needs supplies or someone who wants to donate to a good cause, be sure to check out what’s happening at https://www.facebook.com/groups/AJTeachersHelper/

Another quote from the I Love AJUSD series:

I truly love our kids at Desert Vista Elementary School. They have an honest want to learn, grow, and achieve higher realms of education. - Caerensa Klauss
Playground Unites Students and Community

They say it takes a village to raise a child. At Peralta Trail Elementary School it took a village of kindness and $40,000 in donations to build a playground that will create a more inclusive play area for students with mobility constraints.

Approximately 70 community and business leaders, volunteers, staff members, PTO members, parents, congregants from Gold Canyon United Methodist Church and even students from AJHS came together to excavate, assemble and install a new playground.

The bulk of the donations - $30,000, came from Gold Canyon United Methodist Church, The Apache Junction Moose Lodge donated $4,000 and the remainder of fundraising came from the school and its PTO.

East Valley Institute of Technology (EVIT) students in Enrique Reyes construction technologies class at AJHS created the forms for the curbing, Knochel Bros. Inc donated three yards of concrete and Home Depot provided additional materials. All facets of the installation and assembly were professionally supervised by Dave Bang Associates Inc. and PRO-TECT TURF, Inc. to ensure meeting all safety requirements.

The next community endeavor for PTES will be to purchase and install a shade structure to preserve the playground and ensure that the equipment can be used year round.

Students Catapult to Success at FPES

Sixth grade students at Four Peaks Elementary School combined science, history and social studies when they learned about trade routes of the Silk Road and created mini catapults.

The students studied the travels of Marco Polo for a day and the importance of The Silk Road and its impact on trade and travel. The next stage of learning became more hands-on when students were put in teams and experienced a Silk Road simulation to discover and identify items that were traded at the time.

“In ancient history, as today, trade opened up the sharing of ideas, inventions, language, and influenced culture,” said Kerri Mortenson, a sixth grade teacher at FPES. “The trade along The Silk Road was important as it generated a robust economy for the kingdoms and empires of the time.”

During the third day of instruction students were tasked with creating a catapult. However, there was a catch. Each team was missing an item so in order to complete their mission they had to travel the simulated Silk Road to negotiate the needed “trade”.

The students enjoyed building catapults and launching their cotton ball ammunition, however the exercise provided a higher purpose. The curriculum-based lesson also involved using critical thinking skills and incorporated a Science Technology Engineering Mathematics (STEM) component. The finale was when the teams competed to see which catapult launched the farthest.
Employee Spotlight – Caerensa Klauss

Santa isn’t the only Claus who is a favorite with children. Caerensa Klauss, a fifth grade science and social studies teacher at DVES is a favorite with students, staff and parents. She was recently named elementary school Teacher of the Year by VFW Post 7968 (see story on page 1).

“Caerensa’s dedication and creativity makes learning fun for her students through projects, role-playing, connecting learning through real world experiences, and by participating in school assemblies honoring our veterans,” said Pat Smith, principal at DVES. “Her students, parents, and colleagues respect her as an educator and she inspires others to believe, always learn, and be a great citizen who makes a difference in our world.

Caerensa is in her third year of teaching at DVES and loves every aspect of her job.

“I have the best job in the world because I get to come to school every day and see a spark in the classroom and on each of my students’ faces,” said Caerensa. “Many people write books that have to do with magic or mystical forces. I get to create magic in the classroom. That alone, makes my job amazing!”

In addition to her love of teaching – particularly American History, Caerensa has another light of her life – her rescue dog, Ozzie. Not unlike her students, Ozzie can be a big of a troublemaker at times, but she loves him anyway.

Prospector Rolls to Success

AJHS has a top-ranked athlete in Hunter Mayes. The high school junior is currently number one in the state and 41st in the U.S. in bowling. Hunter’s average score is an impressive 230 a game and he has won numerous championships. He recently competed in a Junior Bowler Tournament and finished first. The top spot helped him bag $500 in winnings that are placed in a Junior Bowlers Scholarship Fund that will help pay for his college tuition and expenses after he graduates.

Colleges and universities are already recruiting him. He intends to bowl on a college team, but at this point he is undecided on which school he will attend. He is more certain about his field of study—engineering.

Hunter puts his love of engineering and mathematics to good use in his construction technologies class where he serves as lead foreman. Now that he is in the advanced class he and his classmates are able to go to job sites and work on a wider range of projects. His favorite teacher is Enrique Reyes who teaches EVIT construction classes at AJHS.

“Mr. Reyes is my favorite teacher because he is very involved and really cares about his student’s futures,” said Hunter. “I cannot say enough good things about this man.”

Hunter is a lifelong AJUSD student who attended Gold Canyon and Peralta Trail elementary schools, CCJH and is now a proud Prospector at AJHS.
The Tax Credit that Works Like a Gift for Your Local Schools!

Tax Credit contributions made between January 1st and April 15th can be applied to either the previous year’s or current year’s taxes.

Your $200 (single taxpayers), $400 (married taxpayers) or any lower amount supports extracurricular programs, sports, clubs, fine arts, field trips and activities for Apache Junction Unified School District students. You choose where your contribution goes, then take your dollar-for-dollar tax credit on your AZ individual tax return.

Contributions must be:
- Postmarked by April 15th to Apache Junction Unified School District, 1575 West Southern Ave., Apache Junction, AZ 85120
- Hand-delivered to any school or the District Office by April 15th or
- Made by credit card at [https://www.ajusd.org/Page/12165](https://www.ajusd.org/Page/12165).

Make check payable to AJUSD

Please send my receipt to:

Name:__________________________________________________

Mailing Address:__________________________________________ City, State, Zipcode:________________________

Or email my receipt to:______________________________________________________________________________

Thank you!!

Please select no more than 3 schools or activities:

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<th>School Name</th>
<th>Athletics</th>
<th>Career Technical Activities</th>
<th>Extracurricular Activities (Field Trips, Fine Arts, Clubs, STUCO, etc.)</th>
<th>Undesignated (allow site council to designate need)</th>
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Total Contribution: $________

Note:
Contributions for programs other than those listed on the form will be placed in the undesignated fund at each school.