

D211 POST: FREMD SAYS THANK YOU TO HEALTH CARE WORKERS



Members of William Fremd High School's sophomore class executive board wanted to say thank you to area health care workers battling the COVID-19 pandemic. To do this, they collected more than 100 cards from students which were delivered to AMITA Health St. Alexius Hospital in Hoffman Estates.

Fremd High School Science Department Chair Karl Craddock said the idea came out of a brainstorming session among the 54-member board.

"They wanted to help raise the spirits of the students and outside community during this difficult time," he said. "While they came up with many great ideas, the one that they kept coming back to was Thank You notes for the frontline health care workers that are battling the COVID-19 crisis."

He said the student who led the planning and organization of the card drive was sophomore Manaswita Kodali. She said her inspiration came from her own family.

"I was inspired by the health care workers' resilience and sacrifice during this pandemic," she said. "My uncle is an MD doctor on pulmonary medicine in India and he is also risking his life and my grandparent's lives for the sole purpose

of serving his community. Every day is full of fear for my entire family.”



Fremd Science Department Chair Karl Craddock (left) and sophomore Manaswita Kodali (right) deliver cards to Cate Osterholz at AMITA Health St. Alexius Hospital in Hoffman Estates.

As part of her preparation for the drive, Kodali designed the cards and coordinated a plan for delivery to St. Alexius. Craddock said that once the drive was started, students from a variety of groups pitched in to help.

“We had students from clubs like the Red Cross Club and Student Council along with teachers and support staff contribute,” Craddock said.

In only two days, the group had created more than 100 cards which were then delivered to St. Alexius where they were met with appreciation from the medical staff.

Kodali said that she hoped this would not only uplift the front-line medical providers but teach her fellow students.

“I want my fellow students to know that even the smallest form of appreciation towards the health care workers can make a big difference in their hearts,” she said.

Craddock added that he hopes this sends a message of both unity and

appreciation.

“We hope that it sends the message that we are all in this together, and that during this holiday season, it is important to take the necessary precautions to keep everyone safe,” he said. “In addition, take time to give thanks for our community front line workers who are working around the clock to keep us safe.”

D211 POST: SCHAUMBURG STUDENTS HOLD STUFF THE BUS FOOD DRIVE

Students from Schaumburg High School’s Students Helping Others partnered with the Schaumburg High School Student Council to hold their first ever “Stuff the Bus” food drive November 11.

CONANT AND HOFFMAN ESTATES HIGH SCHOOLS REPRESENTED IN FOURTH OF JULY PARADE

Students from Conant and Hoffman Estates High Schools represented their schools and District 211 in the Hoffman Estates Fourth of July parade. See a few of them in action below.



Carl Zbed was riding in the CHS car.



Conant High School



CHS cheerleaders march in parade

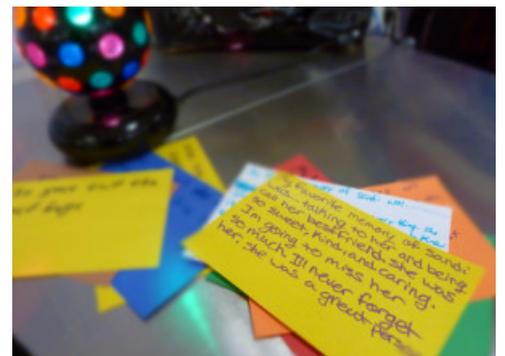
CONANT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS CELEBRATE LIFE OF CAFETERIA STAFFER SANDI SMITH



Sandi Smith was affectionately known as the "Blue Cart Lady," or "Cookie Lady" by Conant Students.

When students at Conant High School entered the cafeteria for lunch, many looked forward to something more than socializing and satisfying their hunger. For some, the highlight of their lunch experience rarely had to do with food – it was the person they could always find working the blue snack cart.

Cafeteria staff member Sandi Smith, who worked and interacted with students from behind her blue cafeteria cart for 12 years, passed away on March 17. In honor of her legacy, students in the school's student council approached administration to create a moment of silence during the week, and a "Blue Out Day for Sandi," which took place on March 22.



Handwritten cards recalling students' favorite memories of Sandi were placed on the blue cart during lunch

| hours.

“Some of her biggest attributes were her relationships with the kids,” said Mary Jo Walsh, food service manager at Conant High School. “She loved them and they loved her. She knew most of the kids by name, and remembered what they would order.”

Students and staff were encouraged to wear the color blue to honor Smith, who the students affectionately knew as “The Cookie Lady,” or “The Blue Cart Lady.” The cafeteria offered special, extra-large cookies that were \$1 each. On an average day, 130 cookies are sold during lunch hours. During Smith’s day, the cafeteria staff sold 430 in her memory.



Sandi’s cart was decorated with balloons and a sign by CHS student council students.

Decorative signs hung in the hallways, and one hung on Smith’s blue cart that read “Sandi’s Cart. A Cougar Forever.” Students also created hand-written cards with their fondest memories on them, which were placed on the blue cart during lunch hours. Lastly, in addition to the moment of silence and “Blue Out Day for Sandi,” students are currently passing around a petition to permanently name the cart “Sandi’s Cart.”

“I still don’t believe you’re gone,” wrote a student on a card to Smith. “You’ve made a huge impact throughout Conant, and you’ll never be forgotten. I’ll never forget your kind gestures, your giving heart, and contagious great attitude. I know that you’re in a better place and you deserve to be there.”



Junior Vivek Desai signs a petition during lunch to officially name the blue cart “Sandi’s

Walsh said she, along with her cafeteria staff, was overwhelmed by the students' support and reaction to Smith's passing. However, she said she is not surprised because the students absolutely adored Smith. She had her regulars she could joke around with, and Walsh said this is why it's great that students came together to create this event – an event to celebrate her life.

“She had all the patience in the world and when she was out sick for a while, I called her and said ‘Sandi, the sales on the carts are down. Can you give me some of your secrets?’” Walsh recalled. “She answered by saying ‘the only secret I have is to give those kids love and care.’ We loved her, and that the students did this all on their own just means the world to us.”

TEACHER FEATURE: HEHS' RYAN BROWN

“Students see that the things they learned here at HEHS and with me, whether it's in the gym, through other activities, or in the classroom, have benefitted them in life. That is the whole reason that I am doing this.”



When Ryan Brown was a student at Hoffman Estates High School, little did he know he would return to walk the halls again as a teacher and coach. Although he had dreams of becoming a doctor and breaking the family mold of working in education, he realized his true passion is for writing, literature, and books.

“When I got through my senior year, Kathy Wandro [retired HEHS teacher] was my teacher, and it was at that point I realized I wanted to teach,” Brown said. “She had

so much passion for the things she was doing, and I saw that every day when she came to school she was having fun, and that was one of the things that I wanted to make sure I was doing.”

After spending some time working at the middle school level, he took his experience and set a goal on teaching at HEHS. Once he landed a position teaching English, he knew District 211 was the place he wanted to be.

“I look at the people who are around me and they care so much about this school and the students that there is energy in this building that I don’t know other people have ever felt anywhere before,” Brown said. “I couldn’t imagine working anywhere else, and I definitely pride myself on being a D211 teacher, but being a teacher at HEHS has fulfilled me and it’s because I work with so many wonderful people.”

Brown is heavily involved with HEHS outside of the classroom. In addition to teaching freshman and AP English, he is head coach of the boy’s gymnastics team, the same team he was on during high school, sponsor of the literary magazine: *Directions*, sponsor for Peers and Leaders/Helping Other People Everywhere (PALS/HOPE) and is the assistant adviser to Student Council. Brown said he loves being involved with these programs because of the diversity in students who represent HEHS, and the opportunity to give back to the school and community through volunteer work and scholarships. One commemorative scholarship through PALS is in honor of former PALS president Nirman Vasanwala who died while in college. Brown said the scholarship keeps Vasanwala’s ideas alive.

“Every time I think of my plate being too full or doing too much, I think about how hard Nirman worked, and I also think about not being able to give that scholarship away to students,” Brown said. “I know that is what I am supposed to do, and we come in contact with some great kids in PALS that are yearning to do so much more for the community and world.”



From left to right: Ruben Cabrera, Nick Cannella, Ryan Brown, Marc Malinowski, and Josh Parado during the Academic Scholars dinner. Those students are not only on the gymnastics team, but also in Brown's class.

Brown uses the same teaching techniques in the classroom and gymnasium, although he

said the two are very different. During gymnastics, he is able to create a bond and trust with his student-athletes that are different from the classroom. His student-athletes need to be mentally sound before they start trying new moves in the gym, and that is why Brown said the team talks a lot and maintains a high level of trust. In the classroom, he has his students “check in” before class starts by stating a number to represent how they are feeling for the day. Sometimes when the class seems to be struggling that day, it influences lessons or the teaching approach he uses.

Those approaches and connections with his students are important to Brown because each student needs to feel that bit of individual attention, even if it’s just saying hello to a student when they pass by. That’s why he said one of the aspects of teaching that makes him feel proudest is hearing from his students after they have already graduated.

“I get a lot of letters, emails, and Facebook messages from former students who, down the road, look back and tell me the impact that I had on them as a teacher,” Brown said. “They see that the things they learned here at HEHS and with me, whether it’s in the gym, through other activities, or in the classroom, have benefitted them in life. That is the whole reason that I am doing this.”