



Lyle Principal Todd Baughman speaks during the "buddy bench" dedication for late teacher Kelly Buhler.

'She was just a blessing'

Late kindergarten teacher Kelly Buhler remembered with a 'buddy bench'

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Kelly Buhler loved children.

Her family: husband, Steve, and their children, Jacob, Jesse, Josiah and Mary, were the "apple of her eye," said Buhler's mother-in-law, Judy Buhler.

Nearly as important was the career she turned into a calling — the education of Dallas School District's youngest students. She spent her final five years as a teacher at Lyle Elementary School.

"She fits what you would think a kindergarten teacher would be: a sweet, sweet disposition, extremely patient, extremely kind," said Amy Aebi, Kelly's sister-in-law.

Her career was cut short by cancer. She was forced to quit working early in the 2013-14 school year and died in June 2014.

"That was her life, actually, kids," said Judy Buhler.

Now, in a sense, Kelly can



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Kelly Buhler, right, during a Relay for Life event.

be something at the school where kids could be kind to each other or work out problems, just make connections, that totally fits her philosophy," Aebi said. "What a perfect way to memorialize her, instead of just a sign or a tree, something that has a purpose in the school, because that really fits with how she was as a person."

Her tenure at the school was short, but she quickly endeared herself to the school's students and staff.

Principal Todd Baughman said his son, Ethan, was in Buhler's class, and he's grateful for the positive influence she had on his education.

"From a parent perspective, I have esteem and appreciation for Kelly that will last my entire lifetime and continued to pay dividends for my son," Baughman said.

Ethan wasn't alone, as several of her former students attended Friday.

"I remember she was really nice," said former student Isabella Blanchard,

who is now in fourth grade.

Darcy Naughton, the office manager at Lyle, said even while battling her illness, Buhler never forgot to be kind. Naughton said Buhler returned to school with a warm blanket and advice when she was going through chemotherapy for the first time.

"I have my fuzzy blanket," Naughton said on Friday, through tears. "I have Kelly at my house."

That kindness extended to strangers, Judy Buhler said. Kelly made a habit of going to Wal-Mart to share her faith in Jesus, some times more than once a day just so she wouldn't miss anyone, Judy said.

"She had changed so many people's lives," she said.

Judy said the family is honored the school decided to recognize her with the buddy bench.

"She was just a blessing and the kids just loved her," she said.

Dallas school board hears policy concerns

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — A contingent of parents and students spoke before the Dallas School Board concerned about the district's policy that allows a transgender male (female-to-male) student use the boys locker room and bathroom.

The majority of those who spoke before the crowd of approximately 70 people urged the district to change its policy.

"You have to realize that giving one person that comfort, giving that one person the ability to feel that they are accepted in that space, can ostracize the rest of the students that have to use the same facilities and will cause them to feel they don't want to use those facilities," said Tony Sutton, a Dallas resident and parent of students in the district, voicing the same concerns of many who spoke.

"My daughter and two sons, they are concerned about this situation, and because of them I'm hearing speaking right now," Sutton said.

Dallas resident Micky Garus, who received attention for previous comments on the issue, urged people to attend Monday night's board meeting.

He encouraged them to speak out against the policy, posting his own statement to the "Micky Garus Dallas City Councilman" Facebook page Monday at 6 p.m., 30 minutes before meeting was scheduled to begin.

He did not attend, but his statement was read in part by someone else.

The reader was stopped because the statement included personal information about a student.

Students also expressed discomfort with the policy, voicing safety and privacy

concerns. Some said they now feel afraid to use the locker rooms and bathrooms at the school.

"It would be very uncomfortable to have someone of the opposite sex to be in the locker room changing with me, and I'm a very confident person," said senior Angie Sletten.

Another student said if the policy remained, that students who are uncomfortable with using the same facilities should be accommodated.

Of the approximately 20 people who spoke, only two were supportive of the policy, including the student in question, Elliot Yoder.

He said he wanted to address the concerns of parents and students at the meeting.

"I see no way that I'm violating anybody's privacy," Yoder said. "When I'm in the boys' locker room, I never fully undress. I don't shower with them. I don't even look at any of them ... I'm not in there to spy on your kids. I'm not in there for any other reason than to change in a place that is not completely separate from everybody else."

Yoder said having to change in a separate unisex facility, which he did before being allowed to use the boys' locker room, amounted to "a walk of shame."

"I could see that they were labeling me as 'other,'" he said. "I'm not an 'it' so why should I have to use a place that is 'the other' box?"

School officials said the policy, or how it is enforced, was not a board-level decision.

That was based on case law and advice from the district's lawyer, and legal and civil rights representatives of Oregon School Boards Association and the Oregon Department of Education.

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