

PUSD

PAGE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Monthly Newsletter April 2024

www.pageud.org



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Vision

A community of learners who direct our collective actions and resources toward the unique learning needs of every child in order for all students to become college and career ready and successful in a global society.

Motto

Collectively Committed to Every Student, Every Day, Every Minute.



Mission

Our schools are passionate about the learning-for-all mission and understand that every student matters. We are responsible and accountable for the education of every student that walks through our doors every day.

PHS Senior Gets Highest Score on Navajo Literacy Test

Bryce Williams, a senior at Page High School, traveled to Window Rock in mid-February to take the Navajo Nation Seal of Bilingual Proficiency Assessment, a test that measures a person's literacy and proficiency in the Navajo Language. Test-takers are tested on their ability to speak and comprehend the Navajo language.

A month after taking the test, Williams learned he had passed the test. Not only did he pass the test, he passed it with flying colors. Test takers must receive a score of 25 or higher to pass the test; Williams scored a 35, which is the highest score one can receive. Williams had the highest score of 119 people who have taken the test this year.

The test starts with the candidate introducing themselves in Navajo, followed by the test officials introducing themselves in Navajo. The test-taker then explains to the official how they are related. The test-takers must speak only Navajo throughout the entire test. Speaking a single word of English is an automatic fail.

Next, Williams was given a list of words in Navajo, and then used them in a sentence. Test takers then tell and explain a Navajo story, they explain the structure and function of the Navajo government, they explain the Long Walk from the time the Diné got captured, to their release and the Treaty of 1868. All of it can only be told in Navajo.

When the test was finished, Williams asked the test officials if he could also sing a Navajo song for them. They agreed.

"I sang the story about the time Talking God went to the mountain tops and sang to Changing Woman," Williams said.

The test officials were greatly impressed by Williams' fluency in the Navajo language and his depth of Diné knowledge and history.

"I remember Bryce," said Verna Thomas, senior education specialist with the Office of Standards, Curriculum and Assessment Development, Department of Diné Education. "He has great background knowledge. I got emotional because of the things he shared with us, with great knowledge and confidence."

Williams is very active at Page High School. He's passionate about running, basketball and learning more about his Navajo culture and history. Williams is a member of Page High School's cross-country team, basketball team and track team. This is his first year running cross-country and his performance helped his



team win the state championship. He has been on the varsity basketball team all four of his years at PHS and was part of the team that won the state championship his freshman year. He runs the 800 and the mile in track and was part of the team that took the regional title last year.

In addition to athletics, Williams is also very involved with the Page High School UNITY Club. He is the club's president this year, and served as its vice president last year. The UNITY Club is one of Page High School's most active and proactive organizations. The UNITY Club has traveled to Washington D.C. as part of an Impact Aid delegation, they have performed songs in Window Rock as part of the Council Delegate's Winter Session and they have traveled to Phoenix to take part in the Arizona School Board Association's where they were part of the swearing in ceremony for incoming ASBA President, Desiree Fowler.

Williams is also a very dedicated student. He currently has a 3.8 GPA, with half a semester remaining in his high school career. He has already been accepted to 20 universities and is still waiting to hear back from Harvard, Stanford and Georgetown. At university, Williams plans to study either engi-

PHS Music Students Bring Home Big Accolades

Page Unified School District celebrated Music in Our Schools Month in March with choir, band and strings concerts from the Page Middle School and Page High School Bands in the Cultural Arts Building.

In late March the PHS Concert Choir competed in the Arizona State Festival and gave an amazing performance. They earned a Superior rating on their performance of three choral pieces they prepared. They also earned a Superior on the Musicianship/Sight Singing portion of the festival. They achieved an overall rating of Superior with Distinction.

Additionally, three PHS students – James Nolan, Samuel Robertson and Reed Nolan – competed in All-State Choir and gave excellent performances.

James Nolan earned 5th Chair Tenor, Samuel Robertson earned 37th Chair Tenor and Reed Nolan earned 5th Chair Tenor Alternate.

“What is really neat about Music is that when these students compete, they are not just competing against other 2A schools or 3A schools; they are competing against every school in Arizona, including all of the 5A and 6A school students along with all the other regions,” said Lynda Nolan, music teacher at Page High School and Page Middle School. “It is pretty cool to think about how well these students did.”



James Nolan, Jack Jarrett, Samuel Robertson and Reed Nolan at State Choir.

Keisling to Coach PMS Wrestling, Billie Takes Over PHS Wrestling

Page High School's head wrestling coach, Kyran Keisling, announced he is stepping down as the high school's wrestling coach to be head wrestling coach at Page Middle School.

Coach Keisling is making the move so he can coach his twin sons, both of whom are wrestlers, both whom will be entering Page Middle School next school year.

Page High School's head football coach, LeLand "Bubba" Billie, will take over as Page High School's head wrestling coach next school year. Coach Billie's move to the wrestling program leaves a vacancy at head coach in Page High School's football team.

The open head football coach position has already posted and interviews will occur as qualified candidates apply.

"We are looking for the best possible candidate to build on the solid program Bubba and his coaching staff have built," said PUSD athletic director Moore.

The announcement of the open coach position comes early enough that Moore is confident many strong candidates will apply.

As Coach Billie moves into his new role as wrestling coach, he'll keep a foot in the football world to help the new coach get a strong start and continue the progress he began.

"I was happy to hear Bubba will help the new coach get started," said Moore. "He has built a strong program. We don't want it to lose steam."

Coach Billie is famous throughout Page for the deep passion and wealth of knowledge he brought to the game. So it came as a surprise to some when he announced he was moving to the wrestling program. It's true that Coach Billie loves football, but he loves wrestling even more.

"My passion is wrestling," said Coach Billie.

In high school, Coach Billie was a highly-accomplished wrestler. In 2002 he was the Freco, Greco and Freestyle state champion as a member of the Arizona National Team. In 2003, during his junior year of high school, Billie was runner-up at the AIA state wrestling tournament, wrestling for Holbrook High School.

Coach Billie has five years experience as an assistant wrestling coach for Holbrook's for its Youth, Middle School and High School teams, and he was head wrestling coach for Winslow Middle School in 2014.

Coach Keisling has been the high school varsity coach for 12 years and was an assistant coach before that going



back to 2002-03 season. During that time he and his assistant coaches have built a wrestling dynasty that's respected throughout Arizona. During his tenure as varsity wrestling coach he has produced numerous state medalist: 17 5th and 6th place finishers, 7 4th place finishers, 3 Consolation Champions, 13 Runners Up, and 9 state champions. Keisling was only the eighth head wrestling coach at Page High School since the program began in 1973.

With his own boys entering Page Middle School, Coach Keisling plans to bring the same champion-level attitude and work ethic he created at the high school to the middle school program.

"It's a program that's in need of some love and attention," he said. "I'd like a chance to build it into a solid program."

Coach Keisling is also looking forward to the stress level dropping a bit as he transitions from high school to middle school.

"Coaching at the high school level is all-consuming, and it has worn me down," he said.

Coach Keisling and Matt Penrod will also continue coaching their youth wrestling camp, the Dust Devils Wrestling Club (not to be confused with the Page Middle School, which changed its name from the Panthers to the Dust Devils earlier this year). The original Dust Devils wrestling program was started by Matt Penrod in 2002.

A Night of Fun with Donkey Basketball



The donkey basketball game was a great time, fun for participants and spectators alike. It was teachers and staff vs. students. The Teachers' Staff won by a narrow margin 34 to 32.

School Board Recognizes Girls Basketball Championship Season



Page Unified School District's School Board recognized the championship season of the Page High School girls basketball team. During the remarkable 2023-24 season the Lady Sand Devils finished the season with a record of 23-5 overall, 11-3 in their region. Lady Sand Devils head coach Celeste Claw was also named 3A North Coach of the Year, and Alyssa Harris was named 3A North Player of the Year.

The Lady Sand Devils extraordinary season also caught the attention of CBS Sports, which traveled to Page to film a short documentary about its players. The piece aired Sunday, April 7th.

PUSD Partners with Varsity Tutors to Provide Additional Student Resources

Page Unified School District has partnered with Varsity Tutors to provide resources and tools for our students to help them sharpen and improve numerous aspects of their education. This program is FREE to PUSD students.

Varsity Tutors offers 24/7 On-Demand Chat Tutoring, Celebrity-led Star Courses, College and Career Readiness, Enrichment Classes, Live Group Chat, On-Demand Essay Review, and more.

Visit pageud.org/students to learn more about this opportunity.



Photos from Page Invitational





Congratulations to the Sand Devils track teams. Both boys and girls teams took first place at this year's Page Invitational.

Desert View's Family Night and Health & Wellness Fair is Fun and Beneficial



Desert View held its annual Spring Family Night & Health and Wellness Fair. Those who attended got to sample food from different cultures, play games outside, visit information booths from local non-profits all while listening to great tunes from DJ Serventi, who kept the energy rockin'. Thanks Desert View for arranging a fun and informative night!

March Choir Concert



The beautiful voices of Page Middle School and Page High School choir students performed an inspiring concert in the CAB last night.

The theme of the concert was “Cultures around the World” and featured songs from America, Korea, Japan, Latin America, Welsh, France, Britain, Germany and Kenya.

The night featured solos from Cora Vasquez, Cambria Haskey, Mylee Metz, Aaron Rankin, and a piano solo from

James Nolan. Mylee Metz was also a Featured Vocal Soloist. She sang, in French, Non, Je ne Regretta Rien, by Edith Piaf. Abigail Goldtooth and Karcyn Mangum performed a duet.

Concert-goers were treated to a lovely piece of music written by Page native Lynette Kidman Nunez, “The Road Not Taken”, specifically for the Page High School and Page Middle School Choirs.

PMS Band & Strings Concert



PHS Band & Strings Concert



neering or medicine.

Williams grew up speaking Navajo from the time he was a baby. He has also studied it in school in elementary school, junior high and high school.

“I’ve heard it my whole life,” he said. “I heard it from my grandparents and great-grandparents. I really learned a lot from my grandfather [Lee F. Johnson Sr.]. I used to take care of him at home. I’d cook for him and chop wood for him. Every day we’d check the livestock together, the cows and sheep, and check the windmill. Every time we drove he made sure we spoke Navajo and made sure I learned something new each time. That’s where I picked up a lot of Navajo. I also learned a lot from my great-grandfather, Fort Johnson, was a medicine man. He was a Nine Night Chanter.”

The Nine-Night Ceremony dates back numerous generations going back to 1,000 B.C.E, if not earlier. It is considered to be the most sacred of all Navajo ceremonies and one of the most difficult and demanding to learn, involving the memorization of hundreds of songs, dozens of prayers, and several very complicated sand paintings.

Williams is himself an apprentice medicine man. He attends a Navajo ceremony nearly every weekend.

“I want to learn all the Navajo ways and ceremonies,” he said, “and that’s a big reason why being a fluent Navajo speaker is important to me. All Navajo ceremonies, chants and prayers are only done in Navajo. Knowing and speaking the Navajo language is a big part of who I am. It makes me who I am as a person, it defines my character, my traits and my identity. My Navajo heritage and the pride I get from that has helped me through a lot of challenges I’ve faced.”

Desiree Fowler, Arizona School Board Association president, and Page Unified School District board member, says preserving the Navajo Language into the future is an important bridge linking Diné culture and heritage to the past.

“Our Navajo language is dying out, but it’s important that it doesn’t,” Fowler said. “Having the ability to speak our native language brings increased awareness individually and for the Navajo Nation. The Navajo Language has layers and complexities that don’t come out when they’re translated into English. English can’t capture or express the fullness of a Navajo word or expression. Anyone who is a fluent speaker of Navajo, such as Bryce, has a stronger foundation to stand on. They have a better understanding where they come from and the teachings of our elders. The preservation of that knowledge is sacred to us and it’s very important to who we are as Diné.”

The primary cause behind the demise of the Navajo Language was the placement of Navajo children into boarding schools.

“The idea of the boarding school era was to Americanize and acculturate American Indians,” said Carlos Begay,



Indian Education Committee Coordinator for Page Unified School District. “The concept, the goal, was to assimilate Diné, and other American Indians, into American society. We were taken out of Navajo society and dropped into American society. We were meant to be lost and controlled. We were taught to look down on our traditional ways and to hate them and be ashamed of them. We were trained to follow orders, not to question things. And, we were forbidden to speak Navajo. Anyone who did was severely punished. A lot of the Navajo language was diminished during that time. A lot of Diné who attended boarding school never learned to speak Navajo and were then never able to pass that on to their own kids.”

Recent statistics from the Navajo Nation show that out of 380,000 Diné, only about 5,000 can speak fluent Navajo.

In his free time, Williams reads books written in Navajo as a way to increase his literacy and comprehension of the Navajo Language.

“I really love learning about science, math and other subjects from the Navajo’s traditional way of looking at and understanding the world,” Williams said. “The Navajo’s traditional understanding of the world, our way of doing math and science used to be laughed at. Our ancestors were very intelligent people, and now science is catching up to their indigenous knowledge.”

Williams will graduate from Page High School in June and speaking and teaching the Navajo language will continue to be a priority for him as he enters his adult life.

“It’s been important to me to preserve our language and culture and see it grow,” he said.

“I want to teach my younger siblings and the younger generation how to speak it. And when I have my own kids, I’ll teach them to speak it from the day they’re born.”

Employees of the Month

Certified Employee of the Month Feb. 2024



Jenise Bartholomew

Classified Employee of the Month Feb. 2024



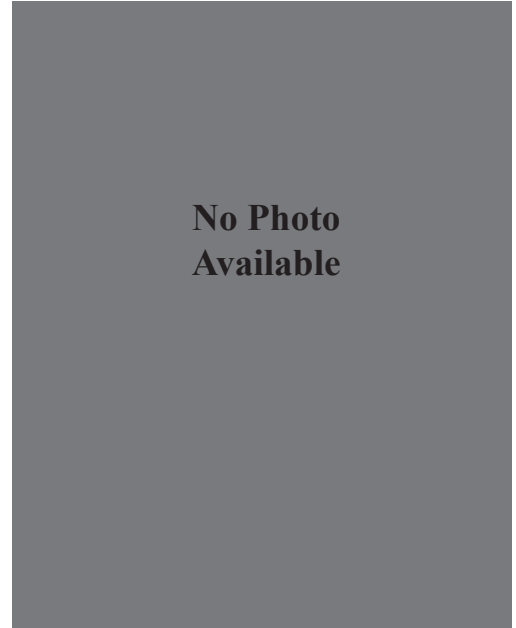
Kelsey Knight

February

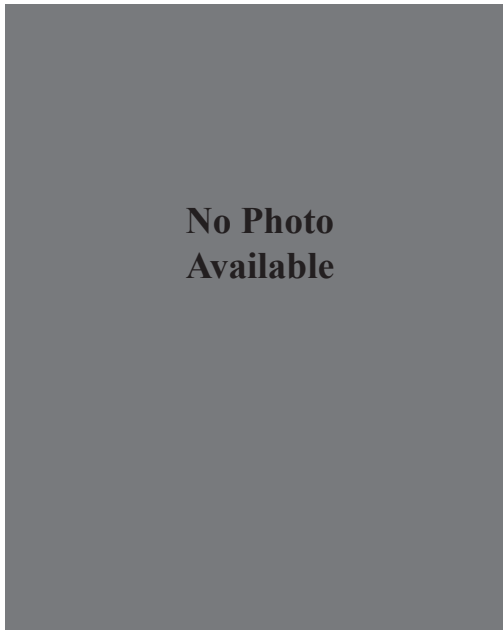
Students of the Month



Autumn Begay
Lake View Primary



Quanahe Crank
Desert View Intermediate



Darren Tsinijinnie
Page Middle School



Landon Nez
Page High School

February Students of the Month



Shaylee Reid
Manson Mesa High School



Lakyra Adson
Sage & Sand Virtual Academy



Purcaius Hepworth
Preschool



Announcements

PUSD PAGE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

— NOW HIRING —

Bus Drivers

Bus driver pay starts at **\$17.67/hour**

Drivers are eligible for ASRS retirement, and medical, dental & vision benefits.

9 & 11 month positions available

APPLY NOW



To apply or for more information, please call **928-608-4101**

PUSD PAGE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

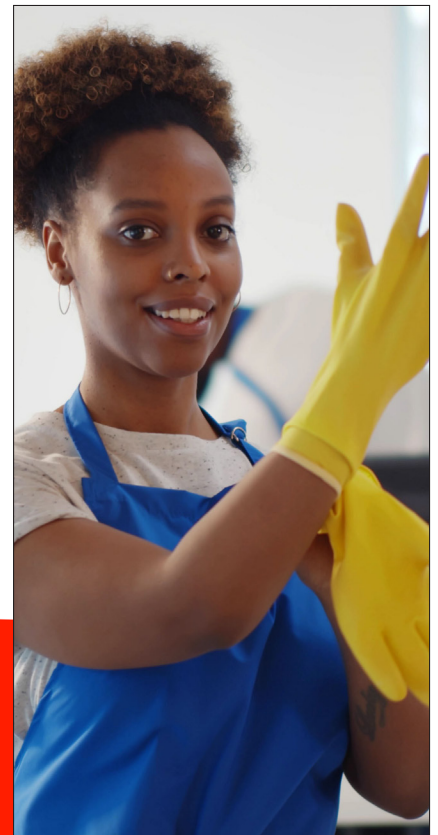
— NOW HIRING —

Custodians & Maintenance Workers

Custodians and Maintenance Workers are eligible for ASRS retirement, and medical, dental & vision benefits.

Earn vacation and paid time off.

APPLY NOW!



To apply or for more information, please call **928-608-4101**

The Page Early Childhood Group & Blue Cross Blue Shield Arizona presents

3rd Annual

Spring into Health

PAGE HEALTH & WELLNESS FAIR

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NRTA



FIRST THINGS FIRST



For more information contact Jaques Goncarville, First Things First Program Coordination Specialist
at (480) 942-9345 or jgoncarville@firstthingsfirst.org.



Lake View Primary
Presents:

Kindergarten Round up

Wednesday, April 24th
5-7pm

Items Required for Registration:

- Immunization Record
- Birth Certificate
- Certificate of Indian Blood (CIB)
*for Native American Students
- Physical Proof of Residency

This may include, but is not limited to: bills, rental agreement, driver's license, bank statement, etc.

MEET
KINDERGARTEN
TEACHERS

REGISTER
YOUR CHILD

PLAY
GAMES

SNACKS
PROVIDED

Questions? Contact
LVP
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