

PINE-RICHLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT

2016-2017 RETIREE RECOGNITION

HANCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Mrs. DJ Banas, Third Grade Teacher



Not many teachers have the opportunity to retire in the same building in which they earned their student teaching experience.

However, Mrs. DJ Banas is one of the rare educators who did just that. She joined Hance Elementary School as a student teacher in 1989 and made such an impression that she was hired in February of 1990 as a fourth grade teacher and has been part of PR for 27 years. After 18 years, she had the opportunity to teach third grade at Hance Elementary after Eden Hall Upper

Elementary School opened to grades four through six. Her most memorable moments were during the 17-years Hance Elementary hosted the Science Olympiad, which is now a part of the program at Eden Hall. "The children looked forward to coming to fourth grade to participate," she said. "Each year we added a new event." Two years ago, one of her student's mother mentioned she was in her class years ago and proudly shared that she still has her Science Olympiad T-Shirt. Those who know Mrs. Banas best say she is an outstanding teacher, colleague and

friend. She is 100 percent student-centered. They say Mrs. Banas' love for children is demonstrated everyday through her interactions with her students and they have learned so much from having the opportunity to work with her. Mrs. Banas says that her family has been supportive of her career over the years. Her husband Jim even joked with friends that he has a degree in bulletin board construction from helping her. The Banas' have two children, who are proud graduates of the Pine-Richland School District.

HANCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Ms. Judy Murray, Paraprofessional



Ms. Judy Murray's career at Pine-Richland started in 2001 at Hance Elementary School. She has worked in the Life Skills and Learning

Support programs. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Development to do what she loves – supporting children. While she says it is too difficult to single out just one cherished moment, she will always remember the wonderful children and dedicated staff.

Those who worked with her say she was always positive and caring, which was apparent through her work with children. They add that Ms. Murray has demonstrated great flexibility through her willingness to do whatever the job requires. She is pleased that retirement will bring flexibility in planning days to spend time with family and friends especially her two grandchildren.

She is also planning to travel and explore volunteer opportunities. She can proudly say that her children are Pine-Richland graduates. She will be greatly missed by the entire Hance family.

"A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." – Henry Adams, Historian; 1838-1918.

2016-2017 RETIREE RECOGNITION

HANCE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Mr. Kenneth Schultheis, Custodian



Mr. Kenneth Schultheis was hired in 2001 and spent more than eight years at Hance Elementary School as the school's custodian. Prior, he worked at Richland Elementary School in the same role. Those who worked with

him say he is a true asset to the district, and they are sorry to see him retire. Mr. Schultheis says he most cherished his time at Hance Elementary, because it felt like home, a small-town school. His wife Pat, who also works at Hance Elementary, is retiring after 32 years as a kitchen manager with

Sodexo. The two will be spending time taking long camping trips across the US. They have two grown children, who graduated from Pine-Richland, and now have grandchildren, who are students at Richland Elementary School.

WEXFORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Ms. Donna Halli, Secretary



Mrs. Donna Halli first began her work at Pine-Richland as a kindergarten and playground aide in 1990. Later she began serving as a secretary in the front office at Wexford Elementary School. Her colleagues remind us that Ms. Halli

has welcomed hundreds of families into Wexford Elementary School and is the first person that our families and students see as they enter or call the school. Over her last 27 years working at Wexford, she has answered thousands of questions, provided support to all faculty/staff, and has made Wexford Elementary a more

special place for all. Those who work with her say she is a passionate yet calm professional and has been dedicated to the Wexford Elementary School community. She says she will miss all of her colleagues and friends that she has made through the years at Pine-Richland.

EDEN UPPER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Mrs. Shelley Byers, Fifth Grade Teacher



Mrs. Shelley Byers has been teaching at Pine-Richland School District for 15 years. She was hired in 2002 to teach at Hance Elementary School. She spent nearly all of her time teaching fifth grade, but did teach first grade for one year. In 2008, she started teaching fifth grade at Eden Hall Upper Elementary School when the school first opened. She has unofficially mentored many new teachers as they came on board with Pine-Richland and welcomed her classroom to several student teachers

and interns. She has shared her expertise by serving on language arts committees several times. Prior to working at Pine-Richland, she was a teacher in Oklahoma and Louisiana. One of her most memorable moments at PRSD was the year a student brought in his puppy to share with the class, and students worked on a plan to have the student bring his puppy every day. Those who know her best say she has a true passion for teaching and learning and cares deeply about her work with students. Not many people know, but Mrs. Byers loves to rollerblade and

may have been seen rollerblading in the hallways of Hance Elementary School. She is probably most famous for her performance rapping the Dewey Decimal system during the Eden Hall follies. Her husband, Bruce, has been her biggest fan always supporting her on the time she put into teaching even after hours. He will be retiring at the same time and both are looking forward to an unstructured lifestyle and spending lots of time with their children, grandchildren and at the beach.

PINE-RICHLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL

Mr. Dennis Cassidy, Custodian



While everyone was at home resting comfortably preparing for the next day, Mr. Dennis Cassidy was working diligently at Pine-Richland Middle School into the wee hours

so that the classrooms were ready and welcoming each morning. He began working as a custodian in 2003 and served those years at Pine-Richland Middle School. Those who worked with him say he was very thoughtful and would often

leave cards for the holidays for the front office staff members. They will miss his dedication to making sure everything was in order for the next school day.

2016-2017 RETIREE RECOGNITION

PINE-RICHLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL

Ms. Elaine Donley, Instructional Assistant



Ms. Elaine Donley had the pleasure of starting at Pine-Richland School District as a part-time substitute teacher for seven years at all levels and in all buildings, new and old. In 1997, she began working as an instructional assistant at Pine-Richland Middle School. She also worked as a teacher in the summer Extended

School Year program for 16 years. During her time, she had the opportunity to work with students in the life skills, learning support and homebound programs and with students on the Autism spectrum at all grade levels. She says she will look back and remember the times students would have those "ah-hah" moments, and would understand and grasp difficult concepts they had been

working on together. In addition, she will miss seeing former students who would stop by just to visit with her. Her colleagues also say they will miss her. During retirement, Ms. Donley hopes to work with the Dyslexia Society and continue tutoring students. She looks forward to spending more time gardening, singing, playing the piano, and enjoying her family, especially her grandson.

PINE-RICHLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL

Mrs. Grace Lyon, Special Education Teacher



Special Education Teacher Grace Lyon began her career at Pine-Richland School District in 1993. Her most recent role has been as a Life Skills Teacher at Pine-Richland Middle School in which she has served eight years. She spent 14 years as an instructional support teacher and two

years as a math literacy coach. She says her fondest memories of her 24 years at PR are of all the wonderful students she had the pleasure of working with throughout her career. Those who worked with her say she was always happy to jump in to help when needed and would go above and beyond to make sure her students were happy on a daily basis. She was best known for celebrating their

birthdays and those who were helping in her classroom. Mrs. Lyon says retirement will be an opportunity to enjoy more time with her husband, Steven, who is a professor in the University of Pittsburgh Special Education Program, and her son, who is employed by the Carnegie Library Network.

PINE-RICHLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL

Ms. Carol Scott, Eighth Grade Science Teacher



Astronomer and writer Carl Sagan once said that.... "Somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be known." The idea of discovery and experimentation was evident in Pine-Richland Middle School Teacher Carol Scott's classroom, where students had the opportunity to conduct hands-on experiments and explore complex scientific concepts. She was able to spark curiosity within her students for

20 years. She started teaching in 1997 as an eighth grade science teacher at the middle school and happily remained in that role. She has served on the district's safety committee for the past 12 years. One of her fondest memories is being chosen as one of only 120 teachers across the US to experience what the astronauts experience on the Zero-G plane in 2008 thanks to the Northrup Grumman Corporation. The experience has helped her to bring the concept of weightlessness alive to her students.

She says she will miss the interactions with the students and their quirky middle school sense of humor and her middle school colleagues who have become like family to her. They, too, will miss seeing Ms. Scott daily. In retirement, she hopes to spend more time with her adult children, who are both Pine-Richland graduates, and her grandkids. Her other love is animals, so she hopes to spend more time pet sitting.

PINE-RICHLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dr. Laura Davis, Director of Pupil Personnel Services



Not many people have the opportunity to watch a school district more than double in size from the time their career began to their retirement. However,

Dr. Laura Davis has watched the district's population grow from 1,800 to 4,600 since the early nineties and the high school athletic program grow from an AA WPIAL to a WPIAL Class 6A in 2016. She began her career here at Pine-Richland in 1986 as a secondary gifted education teacher and a social studies teacher. Later, she served as a

middle school assistant principal and high school principal. While she missed the daily interactions with students, she moved into the role of director of staff development and pupil services. "The growth of the district gave me the opportunity to wear many hats," said Dr. Laura Davis. "I feel most fortunate to have been with the district during its decades of high demographic growth."

Those who have worked with her for most of her career say Dr. Davis is forward thinking and optimistic. She motivates others in her leadership and guides strategic initiatives with

purpose and mastery to meet goals. During retirement, Dr. Davis says she hopes to weed out and de-clutter decades of accumulated stuff at her home and will contemplate her next steps while enjoying coffee and reading the newspaper on her front porch. She would like others to know that she has enjoyed helping others grow and considers it the most engaging work there is. Those who have worked closely with her, say she is very generous and a very passionate educator with a lively sense of humor who can't be replaced.

"One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child." — Carl Jung, Psychiatrist; 1875-1961.