



## **We Wish Shelly a Happy Retirement! Here's the News on His Continued Care. The Outdoor Classroom Will Remain for Student Experiences.**

Good afternoon,

As you may or may not be aware, Ms. Donna Storti has been caring for Shelly and Scenic's outside habitat for many years. This endeavor started as a passion, and her labor of love has certainly been appreciated and grown throughout her time at Scenic. We were very fortunate to have a valued co-worker and friend dedicate so much of herself to maintain the well-being of the animals and the space during school, after school, on nights, on weekends, during the holidays, and throughout the summer.

We are so humbled by Donna's efforts both in and out of the classroom, and deservedly so, she will be retiring after an incredible career. Obviously, this is a huge loss to the district and to the Scenic community.

During discussions with the Board, our facilities department, our administrative team, and our Director of School Safety, the primary focus was the safety and security of our children and staff and the well-being of the animals.

We know folks would step up and offer to assist when they could to continue this passion; however, through previous experiences and firsthand knowledge, the reality of such sustained continuation of the required labor-intensive care and service to the animals and the space simply does not endure as folks get busy, their children move on, etc.

Unfortunately, I personally have witnessed this reality before as the principal of Sabold with our former outside art and sculpture garden. Although a beautiful experience for the community, the once prized environment became unkept and hazardous to students. In fact, with its inevitable end came a host of other unforeseen issues including rodents and pests (mice, rats, maggots, roaches, etc.), foxes, a stagnant pond (which could also be a drowning hazard), and countless wasps' and hornets' nests. All of which compromised the safety of our children. Now, I am happy to report that the area is clean, safe, and available to our students and staff.

I lived this experience as a principal. I know how it feels as an educator to experience difficult change such as this and maintain something outside of the job description. Ms. Scelfo herself offered to take over the management of this project, but the duties of a principal make this impossible. We are beyond appreciative of the offers to assist, but I could not demand or expect our staff to give the type of time, develop the expertise, or complete the physical tasks it would take to maintain such a vast undertaking- giving up prep time, nights, weekends, vacations to maintain the current status.

Additionally, the district is consistently advised not to invite non-staff members into the building. Again, although people would offer to help, the safety and security of our students and staff must be paramount. We have been advised by our legal team, safety committee, and police department to limit access to the building for safety and liability concerns during supervised and unsupervised times. However...

### **We do have some good news to share.**

In exploring our options as a district, I had a conversation with Ms. Storti on May 30. Once again, her boundless passion and genuine heart was on display, as she graciously indicated she would like to care for Shelly in a loving home environment. We can think of no better person to care for Shelly than his primary caretaker.

Although we are in the preliminary stages, we are planning the following:

- Helping Ms. Storti with the transition.
- Assisting with possible visitations by Shelly to Scenic.
- Assisting relocating some animals to safe spaces.
- **Working with our students, staff, and PTA to create a space that can service students academically, socially, and emotionally without requiring the extensive up-keep or safety/liability concerns.**

We realize that this news may be upsetting for some folks. We understand. But we need to do what's best for our animal friends. Shelly and the other animals require and deserve concentrated care. Likewise, as mentioned numerous times, the safety and security of the children must also be at the center of these difficult decisions.

More information will be forthcoming about specifics as we close this year out, and we look forward to the collaborative efforts to follow in creating an area that is clean, safe, and available to our students and staff.

Sincerely,



Peter Brigg

Director of Teaching and Learning for Elementary Education