

AV-W school board gets a glimpse at seventh grade concerns

Bullying and the district's cell phone policy among issues with older students

By Brian Jopek
OF THE LAKELAND TIMES

Bullying and being bullied, along with the policy the Arbor Vitae-Woodruff (AV-W) school district has in place for student cell phone usage, were a couple items on the minds of several of the district's seventh grade students the AV-W school board were updated about at its May 8 meeting.

AV-W school board president Judy Nelson informed the rest of the school board she had recently visited with AV-W seventh graders and had some "food for thought."

She said among the issues, when she asked them what could be improved at AV-W, were more physical activity throughout the school day and longer recess.

"The biggest issue that we talked about was a little surprising to me but it was bullying," Nelson said. "We had quite a discussion about it. The discussion started out with,

basically, 'What was the school board gonna do about this?'"

She said she asked the students how many of them had been bullied.

"It was pretty much every hand that went up," Nelson said. "I said 'Be just as honest with me. How many of you have been the bullier?' And it was the majority of the hands that went up. And I said 'So, who can stop this? You or the board?' So, we had some discussion about that. 'What if you had been on the receiving end why would you treat your fellow students that way? Do you want them to feel the way you feel?'"

She said she was surprised to hear the students, for the most part, indicate they don't tell anyone when the bullying takes place.

"They do not tell the teacher or seek assistance because they don't want to be viewed as a snitch," Nelson said. "I did tell them I would share their comments with the board. On the cell phone issue

and the bullying issue. I asked them to get into small groups, big groups, whatever and give us their thoughts and ideas. How do they think they should be able to report it (bullying)? What do they think should happen? You can't just accuse somebody and then something happens to them. It has to be investigated and be looked at. Was it a misunderstanding? Was it picking on someone? Was it truly bullying? We're not just gonna take one person's word. That one person bullied them and then they were expelled."

Nelson said she stressed to the students the need to put together their thoughts and present them to the school board and if they don't, "it's probably not gonna go anywhere further because they haven't given us some feedback."

"If they do, I didn't promise them what the result would be but it would be taken under consideration," she said.

Regarding cellphones, which are to be kept in a student's locker dur-

ing a school day at AV-W, Nelson said the students "made some interesting points about cellphones."

"One comment was 'Why can't they keep it in their pocket turned off?'" she said. "I said 'Tell me how that's different from having it in your locker?'"

Nelson said the students had questions about what would happen if there was an emergency and the building had to be evacuated.

"Then, their cell phone is in their locker versus with them so they can call their mom and dad," she said. "It was a good discussion. They were very respectful. I said 'What I charge you with is what do you think you should be allowed to do?' And what should be the consequence if someone doesn't follow the rules? If they brought that back to us, we would look at what they presented and give it some consideration."

Brian Jopek may be reached via email at bjopek@lakelandtimes.com.

Demmer Library welcomes new director Peter Kotarba

The Demmer Library board of trustees and staff are happy to announce that Peter Kotarba has accepted the position of director for the Demmer Library in Three Lakes.

The search for a director began in May of 2022, when former director Erica Brewster announced her intentions to move to Door County to join her husband.

Kotarba was hired at Demmer in August of 2022 as the technical service librarian and library accounts manager. He came to the position having already earned his master's degree in library and information

sciences.

Demmer Library board president Ann Asbeck is confident that serving in the director position will further contribute to Kotarba's learning as he works toward his library-focused career goals.

April Hansen, who has been acting director since Feb. 15, says that the staff and patrons are excited to have Peter in the role.

For questions or more information, call 715-546-3391 or visit www.demmerlibrary.org. You can also follow the Demmer Library on Facebook for more details.

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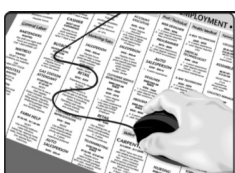
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