

LUHS WINGS: Rising from the ashes

LUHS' special education program grows after August fire

Jake Schexnaydre
OF THE LAKELAND TIMES

Led by special education instructor Jeannine Pfeifer, the WINGS program (Working Independently and Gaining Self-Determination) is a special education program designed for Lakeland Union High School (LUHS) students aged 18-21 to receive job training at any number of local businesses in the Northwoods.

According to the Spring 2022 issue of LUHS's newsletter, *The Quarterly Wing*, the program has formed employment partnerships and received sponsorships with various businesses such as Culver's, The Waters of Minocqua, Save More Marketplace, and *The Lakeland Times*.

WINGS had previously operated a coffee shop known as the Nest N Brew on Highway 51 near the Copy Cat Printing business. However, this past August, Copy Cat had caught fire due to an explosion from oxygen tanks in one of the vehicles in the parking lot. No one was injured, but the fire impacted the WINGS' program storefront. In spite of the setback, this program and its participants have found a way to grow in a new location.

Kid's Kloset

After the fire, WINGS was able to set up shop at the local children's clothing store, Kids Kloset, on Sept. 1 in the plaza area next to Walmart in Minocqua. Because of LUHS' relationship with the owner of the plaza, WINGS was able to take over the Kid's Kloset as part of the program.

In addition to manual tasks like sorting and stocking items, Kid's Kloset employees also learn various business-related skills, such as marketing



JAKE SCHEXNAYDRE/LAKELAND TIMES

Kid's Kloset student employee Marlend Manske stocks clothes on a rack.

and advertising. They are also given opportunities to produce their own items to sell to customers. Some of their merchandise sold ranges from personalized coffee mugs and tote bags to beaded keychains and terrariums. Employees are also tasked with setting and achieving daily goals in accordance with a word of the day, their word this past week was "age appropriate."

Despite the fire, student morale for the program has not weakened; it has only grown stronger. Student employees have adjusted well to working at the Kid's Kloset and have gained valuable experience in the process. "This is an opportunity for us to make lemonade out of lemons," WINGS instructor Jeannine Pfeifer said,

See **WINGS**. . . page 37



JAKE SCHEXNAYDRE/LAKELAND TIMES

Kid's Kloset student employee Christina Krause operates a cash register during a transaction.

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Dinner...be sure to make a reservation, to enjoy the Sampler, Cajun Roast Duck, Etouffees, Blk Prime Rib the Harvest Bisque is so good!... save room for dessert or we can pack it to send home with you!

Make this the week you visit the Blue Bayou.....or next year we'll say we've been waiting 43 years for you to dine with us!

This is short and sweet, as it's a busy week, but I'll have my last 'Thank you' in next week!

Area Happenings:
10/14-16. Womens Weekend @ Camp Manitowish
10/14. Artist Reception for John & Barbara McFarland @ the MWCC
10/14 Be Bald Be Free Day!
Here's to you Stevie and Frank & all having Chemo!
10/14. Spider Man Day!/anyone have a small adult costume?
10/15. Sweetest Day/it's not a greeting card holiday, stop in I'll tell u the story!
10/15. I love Lucy Day/remember the chocolate factory episode?
10/15. Nat'l Grouch Day/send them some sweetness!
10/16. Nat'l Boss Day/Happy day to all of you!
10/18. Blue Bayou CLOSED/ Private Party/OLQP
10/19. Mahjong American Style/Koller Library
10/19. Get to know your Customer Day/Mine are the best!
10/20. Blue Bayou CLOSED/Private Party/MW Lions
10/20. InterN'l Chef Day!/Thank you Matt, Brian, Chris!
10/20. Mother-in-law Day/Will Burton & Jess remember?
10/21-23. Womens Fall Getaway/Camp Jom
10/22. Last night to dine at the Bayou for 2022!

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WINGS

From page 13

“and even though something tragic has happened, we have to look at this as an opportunity.”

A couple of student employees have shared their experiences, Christina Krause a first-time worker and Marlend Manske. When asked about what their favorite part of their jobs are, they both said it was greeting the customers. “We have some ups and downs,” Manske stated, “but we usually work through them and talk about it.”

The expansion to the Kid’s Kloset has not only yielded an expanded customer base, but it has also allowed for generous support from the community. Many of the customers would go into the store, whether it would be to donate clothes, shop around for new clothes, or just to inquire about the WINGS program.

As Pfeifer described, “A lot of the community members who have come in and shopped have said that this has been a needed resource, that they’re very glad that it’s still here and that we’re able to continue keeping it going as a resale store and to also provide a service to the community.”

Grand re-opening ceremony

Kid’s Kloset will have a grand re-opening and ribbon cutting ceremony on Nov. 9 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., as part of the store’s rebranding. It will be sponsored by Papa Murphy’s, with live radio coverage provided by 94.5 WRJO. The event will have food, and raffle baskets containing items donated from the community. Pfeifer is expecting a great turn-out at the event.

After the fire at Copy Cat, the program has evolved to something stronger for the betterment



Some of the Thunderbirds’ merchandise, including hats, mugs, and drink koozies, made by WINGS participants.

“This is an opportunity for us to make lemonade out of lemons, and even though something tragic has happened, we have to look at this as an opportunity.”

Jeannine Pfeifer, LUHS WINGS instructor

of not only school but also for the Lakeland community. With their sights set on new businesses for student employment, there are no signs of this stopping. Pfeifer said, “It’s been really great for

the students to know that they are supported and that they’re also needed.”

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