

Associated Chino Teachers union names top teachers

Liberty Elementary School teacher Stephen Buss has been named Elementary Teacher of the Year and Ayala High history instructor Kenny Donovan, Secondary Teacher of the Year by the Associated Chino Teachers union.

Associated Chino Teachers President Todd Hancock announced the two top teachers for 2015 at the May 21 school board meeting.

Stephen Buss

Mr. Buss has been teaching 21 years. He joined the Chino Valley Unified School District in 1999 as a fourth/fifth grade teacher at Newman Elementary School in Chino where his wife Tracy also taught. He moved to Liberty in 2003 as a fifth grade teacher and has taught fourth/fifth grade this year at the Ontario campus. Mrs. Buss also teaches at Liberty.

His class has completed science fair projects and two of his students received trophies at the district level. Over the years, several of his students have participated in the Odyssey of the Mind creative challenge competitions, and he has co-coached several Odyssey teams with his wife. His class also visited the Pomona Courthouse with other fifth graders and “put Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz on trial.” Some of his fifth graders took an overnight field trip aboard the American Pride sailing ship to experience what it was like to be a sailor in the 1850s.

“When I first started teaching, teachers only had the state framework to use to guide in their instruction,” he said. “...As state standards came into play, state testing became more influential and teachers had to adapt and become more accountable for specific skills measured on high-stakes tests. Now, as we enter Common Core, the importance of teaching students to think for themselves is back in vogue. I see this as a good thing for society, allowing teachers to create arenas where students can push themselves and grow into responsible adults.”

He said teachers need to be flexible because every day brings new opportunities and challenges. He also said teachers need to be knowledgeable in their craft and compassionate toward their students. “I try to tell my students that no matter what happened yesterday, that today is a new day with new opportunities...Frequently, the roles in my classroom are reversed, and I am honored to be their astute pupil.”

Kenny Donovan

Mr. Donovan, who has been teaching 24 years, joined the Chino Valley Unified School District in 2001 as a social science teacher at Ayala High in Chino Hills. In 2008, he began teaching World History.

He brings pop culture into his classroom with a project called the “British are Coming,” a history of British musicians in the 1960s and 1970s.

Mr. Donovan said he likes teaching at the high school level, and tries to “hit on each learning style during each unit.”

He is also a coach and has served this year as Ayala's freshmen football coach, girls' junior varsity basketball coach, and boys' junior varsity golf coach.

In addition, Mr. Donovan advises Ayala's Model United Nations and Make-A-Wish clubs. The Make-A-Wish Foundation grants wishes of seriously ill children.