

Melby becomes St. Mary's principal, encourages student involvement

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Stan Melby looks over paperwork he is working on at St. Mary's Catholic School recently. He is the new principal at the school and is getting accustomed to the new job.

Stan Melby has been in the education field for many years and recently took the helm as principal at St. Mary's School in Lawton.

"I got my degree at UCLA, which stands for University Cameron Lawton Area," he said with a chuckle. "No, actually I did earn my Bachelor's degree in Business Education and my Master's degree in Education Leadership at Cameron."

His first position as an administrator was at Sheridan Road Elementary School as assistant principal.

"After Sheridan Road, I was the head principal at Pat Henry and then went to Almor West Elementary," he said. "I also founded the dance group KKKickers when I wasn't too busy with school administration."

"I like to interact with elementary school age kids," Melby said. "When you get here to St. Mary's the energy of

the kids is invigorating. With some kids today, there are no hugs or kind words in the morning and we try to be positive. We talk about what's bothering them and we give them positive reinforcement.

"Students want to be recognized and want to know someone cares for them besides family. Here, we start everyday with an assembly which includes a prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance. It's a nice way to start the day."

Melby went on to say that there are several extra activities the students can do besides sitting in the classroom all day.

"We have archery and robotic teams that are known throughout the state," Melby said. "We have lots of hands-on activities including a computer lab, Spanish classes, art, along with standard curriculum. We also have a religion class and it doesn't focus on just Catholicism."

Melby acknowledged that other denominations are welcome to attend the school and every Wednesday, the school has a church assembly.

"No one is forced to to anything out of the ordinary as far as religion is concerned," he said.

The school began in 1906 with one priest and 4 nuns. The original buildings were built in the 1930s. St. Mary's has always had a good reputation, according to Melby.

"We have 121 students and classes average 8-10 students per class," he said. "There is more one on one attention with such small classes."

There are 12 teachers at the school and the school consists of Pre-K to the 8th grade at the present time.

"We have a strong parent organization and if anything is needed for the classroom, word of mouth takes care of it," Melby said. "There are African American, Caucasian and Latin American students in the school and our Vietnamese priest gives a very unique perspective to the students."

Melby went on to say that there was a good variety of teachers in the school. Some are retired teachers, some are military dependents and some wanted to get out of public teaching.

"Scholarships are available to attend St. Mary's including several that are financed through the Catholic Foundation, from the school itself and from private donations."

Melby was hired in June. He retired from his teaching career to be his wife's caregiver.

"My wife passed away in June," he said. "The kids are getting used to me and are starting to warm up to me. We're here to help the children and prepare them to be good citizens."

There are 6 members on the Board of Directors for the school. Melby gives an overview of the school and the Board talks about goals for the future.

"The priests are very receptive to new ideas and are 100 percent supportive of the school," Melby said.

"My goals include getting to know the kids and their parents; learning the staff so we can all pull together and figuring out the paperwork."

Melby went on to say that the school will undergo an audit in the spring he has to learn the ins and outs of the school.

"We want our kids to be safe," he said. "That's why there is before and after school care available with breakfast and a snack and teachers and the administration stage fire drills, intruder drills and tornado drills.

"We have intruder drills at least once a month," Melby said. "I want to make sure the kids know what to do in every situation."

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