PUSD PAGE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

District Newsletter

January 2026



4 PUSD Teachers Nominated for Teacher of the Year 1
PUSD Adds Electric Buses to Its Fleet 2
CTE Students Earn ASE Certifications 4
Photos from December Band Concert 5
Photos from December Orchestra Concert 6
Photos from December Choir Concert 7
Page Jr. High Wins NAIC Soccer Championship 8
Photos from Manson Mesa Commencement 10
Meet Fred Keller, the Man Behind the Magic 12
Student Support Services Provides Essential Safety Net 14
Employees of the Month 17
Students of the Month 18

Vision

A community of learners who direct our collective actions and resources toward the unique learning needs of every child in order for all students to become college and career ready and successful in a global society.

Motto

Collectively Committed to Every Student, Every Day, Every Minute.



Mission

Our schools are passionate about the learning-for-all mission and understand that every student matters. We are responsible and accountable for the education of every student that walks through our doors every day.

4 PUSD Teachers Nominated for Teacher of the Year









Congratulations to Wyatt Swinton and Erica Beam who were nominated for Teacher of the Year! Meredith Halvorsen and Anne Crosby were nominated for Rookie Teacher of the Year!

Coconino County Superintendent of Schools, Cheryl Mango-Paget, presented the Certificates of Nomination to the teachers yesterday.

Wyatt Swinton teaches Culinary Arts at Page High School, Meredith Halvorsen teaches Graphic Arts at Page High School, Erica Beam teaches art at Page Early Childhood Learning Center, and Anne Crosby teaches Kindergarten at Page Early Childhood Learning Center.

PLUGGING ALONG

PUSD adds electric buses to its fleet.





The Page Unified School District has added three electric buses to its fleet. You will recognize them by their blue bumper. Other than that, they look the same as the other buses in the fleet.

The electric buses will be used primarily for PUSD's in-town, Greenehaven and LeChee routes, said Director of Transportation, Stephen Young.

The electric buses have pretty good range. Under ideal conditions – running on flat ground, without running the heating or air conditioning, and traveling at 55 miles per hour – the bus can travel about 140 miles. But under realistic running conditions – driving up and down hills, running the heater or A/C – the electric bus get closer to 90 miles.

An electric bus can run two or three routes on a single charge, said Jack Lizotte, PUSD's bus mechanic. The difference between doing two or three routes depends on various factors. One of the key factors is how cold the weather is. In cold weather the bus battery doesn't take as deep a charge and heating the bus prior to taking on students pulls more energy from battery.

Currently, the bus barn has just one charging station. When one of the electric buses goes out on a route, one of the other buses is rotated in to the charging station and charged.

"It takes a little finesse to make sure they're all staying charged up and ready to use," said Lizzotte.

Two more charging stations will be installed at the bus barn in the near future.

PUSD ordered its first electric bus during the last fiscal year, and it was delivered about two months ago. Shortly after the arrival of the first electric bus, PUSD purchased two lightly-used electric buses from a school district in Yuma. Yuma was selling the buses because they didn't have the travel range Yuma needed.

The original plan was to get just one bus to start with, but the two used buses were being sold at a such a reasonable rate they couldn't pass it up. PUSD purchased the two used buses for less than a single new bus.

One of the driving factors in making the decision to purchase the new electric bus was obtaining a generous grant from the state, which reduced the purchase price from $482,000 down to $197,000. By comparison, a new









diesel bus is around $220,000.

Electric bus batteries last anywhere from five to eight years, depending on usage, temperature extremes they endure and other stresses. The battery for the new bus has an eight-year warranty. If the battery fails prior to the eight-year warranty, it will be replaced for free.

Replacement batteries cost between $40,000 to $48,000.

Switching to electric buses for closer bus routes will save the district money in the long run. One of the immediate cost savings will be in the amount of fuel the district won't have to buy to operate it. Another big advantage is th will require a great deal less maintenance, said Lizotte.

"The maintenance on them is a lot less than our diesel buses," he said. "They won't require oil changes, no transmission fluid changes, no fuel or air filters. It costs us about $300 every time we service a diesel bus. I think the only thing we'll need to replace on them is the tires. We may not even need to change the brakes. From what I've learned in the last three weeks driving it, is that I hardly ever need to touch the brakes."

The reason for that is regenerative braking. Regenerative braking is a system in electric and hybrid vehicles that captures the kinetic energy of stopping, converts it into electricity and sends it back into the battery, thus keeping the battery charged longer.

The one downside PUSD has with the electric buses is their limited range. Due to the limited range of their batteries, they will be restricted to in-town and near-town routes; but most of PUSD's bus routes travel long distances into the Navajo Reservation.

"I love the electric bus," said Lizotte. "It's quiet, it has smooth power, everything about it is great other than its limited range. If they could figure out how to get 300 miles per charge out of them, they would be more practical for us."

Young is excited to add the electric buses to the fleet.

"They are extremely quiet, they produce zero emissions and they are very cost-efficient to maintain," he said. "I think they're going to work out great."

CTE Students Receive ASE Certifications







Congratulations to our CTE students who received ASE Certifications this week. Onnen Tsiniginie and Talia Whitegoat for Auto Collision, and Quentin Drake and Daniel Szabo for Auto Tech.

Thank you to our amazing CTE instructors, Sylvester Begay and Chris Green, for giving these students a great education!

Photos from December Band Concert













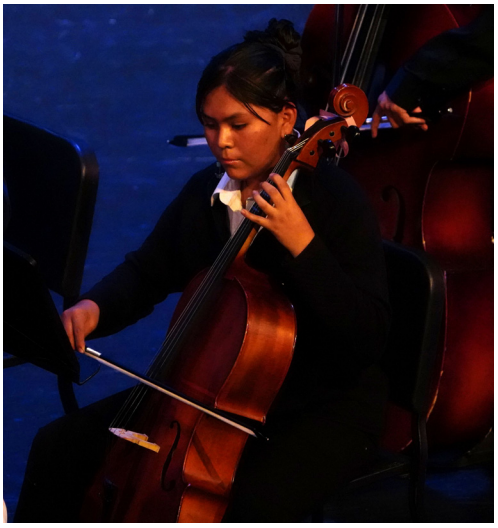


Photos from December Orchestra Concert













Photos from December Choir Concert













Page Jr. High Wins NAIC Soccer Championship











Thanks to a second half rally, the Page Jr. High Sand Devils won the NAIC Championship for the fourth year in a row.

In a very exciting game, the Sand Devils defeated their cross-town rivals, the Glen Canyon Outdoor Academy Wildcats, 4 to 3 to bring home the trophy. The Sand Devils finished the season undefeated. In fact, Page Jr. High soccer head coach Kimberly Codner has been undefeated all four years she has coached the Sand Devils. This is the third year coaching for assistant coach, Revington Babu.

"Compared to previous years, this has been our toughest year, against our most competitive teams," said Coach Codner. "I'm not going to lie; these kids have heart, they have spirit. They're not going to give up."

On a beautiful, 56-degree day, fans from both schools filled the south side bleachers on the final day of school before Christmas Break to cheer on their teams.

The Sand Devils drew first blood on a short-range kick from Kayson Slavens, just two minutes into the game. The Wildcats tied the game a few minutes later when Vernon Weeks lasered the ball past the Sand Devil goalie on a penalty kick. The penalty kick came from a Page handball that occurred inside the goalie box.

GCOA took the lead when Wyatt Abbott found a seam in the defense's the right side. His kicked squeaked through a gap between the keeper and the post. GCOA led 2 to 1 at halftime.

The Sand Devils rallied in the opening minutes of the second half off two goals from Mayson Perry. Perry scored his first goals just 30 seconds into the second half tying the game at two. He scored again just two minutes later which gave his team a 3-2 lead.

"At halftime I told them to remember who they are," said Coach Codner. "We came into this game as the number one seed and I wanted them to play like it. I reminded them that we didn't come here to lose. They worked super-hard and that comeback was beautiful."

GCOA Wildcats head soccer coach Ryan Tracey was very proud of his team. This is only the second year the fledgling outdoor academy has fielded a soccer team.

"Our team played very well," said Coach Tracey. "I'm really proud of our players beyond description. They came out and played with all their courage and all their heart and soul today. That's all I could ever ask of our players. We're just looking for kids who want to give their best and focus on what they can control and they did that."













Photos from Manson Mesa High School Commencement



















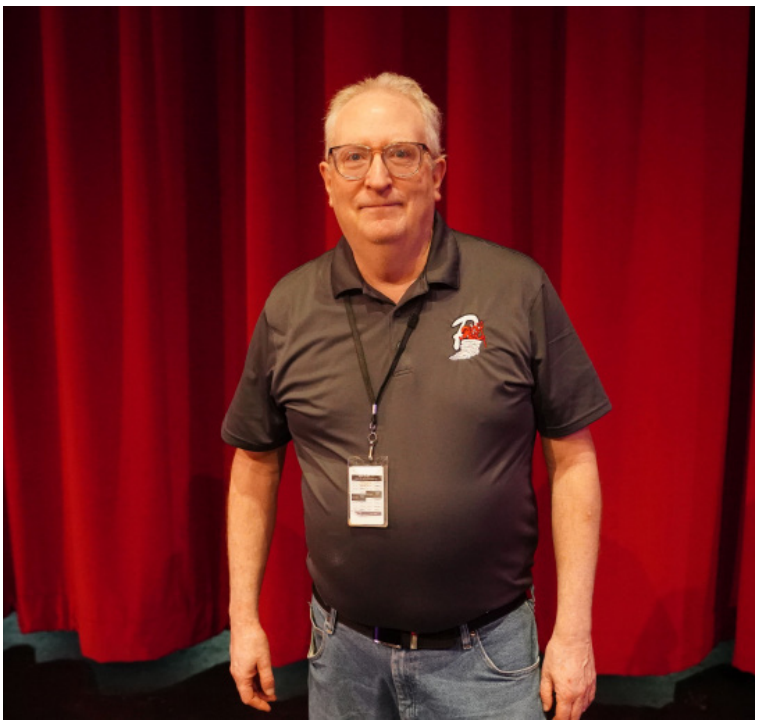




Manson Mesa High School held its December Commencement Ceremony last night.

Congratulations to: Sean Webb, Becca Weenig, Brandon Johnson, JB Curtis, Shyarliegh Scott, Chantal Sampson, Brandon Tso, Ethan Curley, Shaylee Reid, Dalayna Aguero, Antonio Nez, Dante Thompson, Vaughn Tsosie, Kassidy Bryant and Mathias Whitegoat.

Meet Fred Keller, the Man Behind the Magic





A lot of big steps and confidence-boosting moments have happened on the stage of the CAB. Many a fledgling actor have grown wings on that stage – right in front of our eyes – and soared to amazing heights. Since 1977, PUSD students have found their voices, unlocked dance skills, acting and vocal talents and elevated their self-esteem to new levels.

Many magical moments have taken place on that stage, but it wasn't all magic; a lot of it was Fred Keller, the Cultural Arts Building Coordinator.

It's Keller who knows how to operate the sound board, the lights, the microphones, the mixing board. It's Keller who knows where the spot gels are kept, and where the backup lavaliers are. It's Keller who knows what an XLR cable is, and the one place where it can be plugged in.

Operating the CAB is not easy. Operating the CAB is like flying the Millennium Falcon. It's old, it's eclectic, it's falling apart, it glitches out at inopportune times, but somehow, with Keller in the pilot's seat, it's still capable of transporting an audience to a different universe.

Keller is there for every mic check, every rehearsal, every concert, every awards ceremony, every graduation. If things go wrong, he's there to fix it. If the director wants to try something new, Keller is always game to try it. He's as much a part of the CAB as the curtains, the lights or the stage.

Lynda Nolan, Page High School's Choir and Musical Director, says working with Keller makes her job much easier.

"He's always walking around during rehearsals," says Lynda. "If I need anything, I just call out, `Fred, where are you?' and he comes over to see what I need. He is a great help, and very willing to help. If I want to try something special, he will figure out how to do it, or if I need something he'll find it. I have never had to worry about anything. I've worked with him for ten years. He's a fantastic co-worker. He's one of the reasons why I've enjoyed my job."

Having Keller at the helm – and being able to utilize his expertise and experience – allows Nolan and her students to try new things, big things and crazy ideas during their performances. Last fall's musical is the perfect example.

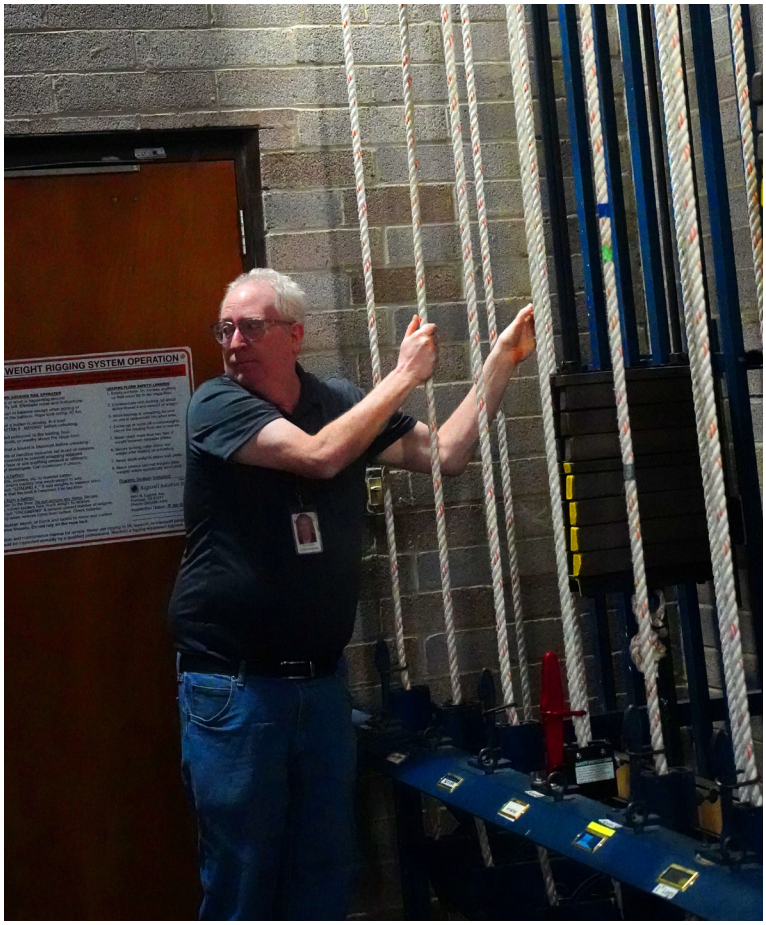
Page High School's production of "Heartless" was an original play, with music, scores, dialogue, monologues and stage directions written by Lynda Nolan and her sister Lynette Nunez. Twelve of the actors wore Lavalier mics, and Keller had six more microphones coming from the orchestra pit, which held a piano player, two keyboard players and a drummer. All of which Keller monitors from the control booth during the play. That always keeps him on his toes.

"Each mic has a different dynamic range I try to keep it at so it doesn't sound bad for the audience," said Keller. "Sometimes they yell louder than they did in rehearsal or speak softer. You have to be ready to adjust them as needed."

Keller starts setting up the sound set up two months before the show.

"it takes a while to figure out what channels to use for what inputs, which channels on the mixer do I need to have





doing what," Keller explained. "And for the lighting, I need to figure out what colors go to which switch and work that out for each one of them. It can take a while to get it all worked out."

Keller also manages a team of students who help him during some of the bigger productions. Some help out backstage, often relaying information to Keller about what's happening backstage, or on stage. He has more students with him in the control booth helping with lighting, sound or running errands.

In the final stages of play rehearsal, Keller receives his own copy of the play. In the margins he writes his own script for what mics are hot when, which spots get turned on, then off and what actor they follow.

Keller has one of those jobs that often goes unnoticed unless something goes wrong. And in the CAB, things try to go wrong a lot. During one of the finals rehearsals for "Wicked", an actor's Lavalier mic suddenly stopped working. Fred was called down from the control room to figure out why. Most of the time, he manages to stay a step ahead of disaster.

During a dance recital last December some of the lighting started flickering, then turning off and on by themselves. This was the first time Keller had seen this one.

"I thought, I didn't touch anything. What's going on?" Keller said.

This wasn't rehearsal. This was the actual event.

"I knew these lights were run by the computer and usually the only way to get them to work again is to reboot the system," Keller recalled. "But this time, I had to do it in the middle of a show. That was kind of tricky."

When one dance number finished, Keller brought all the light sliders down, executed a shutdown, waited a few seconds and started it up again.

"I thought, `I hope this is fast enough.'"

It was. Barely. The next troupe of dancers trotted on stage and took their positions. He slid up the lights and was relieved – and a little surprised – that they came on.

Page High School holds a band concert, strings concert and choir concert at the CAB four times per year. Manson Mesa High School holds its December and June graduations there. Many end-of-year celebrations and awards ceremonies are held there, as well has several other concerts and recitals produced by community organizations. Keller is there for every one.

Keller has a degree in Facility Management. After college he was Facility Manager for the Deseret News in Salt Lake City for ten years.

After coming to the CAB, Keller was taught how to use the sound board, lighting and other functions from Page High School Tech and A/V Club students.

"Any system I didn't know how to operate, they taught me," he said. "I've also taken online classes, read stacks and stacks of manuals and watched a gazillion YouTube videos."

So, if you want to create some magic, call Fred Keller. He's been making it happen since 2009.

Student Support Services Provides Essential Safety Net for PUSD Students

There are few – if any – road signs or mile markers this deep in the Navajo Reservation. Out here, directions to a homesite guide you from landmark to landmark: Turn left at the second windmill, then go about two miles and turn right at the road where three tires are buried in the ground and painted orange. Keep going till you come to a corral with a white horse in it. That's my place.

I spent a day driving the backroads of the Navajo Reservation with Larry Hanks and Virgie Whitehorse. Both work for Page Unified School District's Student Support Services. While we drive down sandy roads, past juniper trees and sagebrush, Whitehorse from time to time points to a home visible through some trees or partially tucked behind a sandstone mesa.

"See that hogan back there?" she says. "We helped three of their girls while they were in school. They're all graduated and doing well now."

When Whitehorse says "We" she means Student Support Services. Whitehorse has worked for Student Support Services since 1995 and she has lots of stories of helping PUSD students navigate various challenges on their way to graduation and a career and life beyond school.

Members of Student Support Services are Larry Hanks, Liaison; Brenlita Cly-Whitehorse, Office Clerk; Louella Barton, Liaison; Sharon Watson, Student Support Services Coordinator, Virgie Whitehorse, Parent Liaison; and Sam Cochran, Social Worker.



Student Support Services are Larry Hanks, Liaison; Brenlita Cly-Whitehorse, Office Clerk; Louella Barton, Liaison; Sharon Watson, Student Support Services Coordinator, Virgie Whitehorse, Parent Liaison; and Sam Cochran, Social Worker.



Student Support Services is an organization within Page Unified School District that, as their name implies, provides services for PUSD students and their families dealing with food insecurity, lack of transportation, lack of housing, lack of school-appropriate clothing, lack of household necessities. They act as a safety net to keep students from dropping out of school or falling through the cracks due to issues out of their control. When working with a student, Student Support Services' end goal is to get the student safely to graduation.

"Most of the problems students in our care are dealing with weren't created by them," says Sharon Watson, Student Support Services Coordinator. "They might come from a household where the parents or guardians have lost their jobs or are dealing with a prolonged illness. After a while there's not enough money for food and other essentials. When we talk to them, we want them to know we can help them with all of that."

The home visits are not quick or hurried, nor are they meant to be. The SSS representatives are often invited inside the house where they talk further.

"The things we're trying to accomplish with our fami-

lies works better if we've established a good relationship with them," said Watson. "It usually takes a few visits for them to open up to us."

Because of the length of the visits and long distances between home sites, SSS representatives are able to visit four to six houses per day. They make notes of what the family needs and they return with those items a few days later, or invite the family to stop at their offices in Page. Student Support Services assists families from Bitter Springs, Bodaway/Gap Coppermine, Kaibeto, and Inscription House, which covers hundreds of square miles.



Student Support Services has several areas where they get involved to help struggling PUSD students. They provide advocacy and wrap-around care, they oversee the McKenney Vento program (a homeless support program), and Children's Incorporated (a program that matches underprivileged kids with sponsors).



As of December 1, 2025, Student Support Services was working with 70 students who are homeless. Most of these students aren't living on the streets. In most instances they are one of multiple families living in one house; usually a relative's house.

The Children's Incorporated sponsors provide a student with a monthly monetary stipend (usually around $70) that the student can use to buy clothing, food, and other needs. Student Support Services oversees more than 50 students who are enrolled in Children Incorporated.

"Most of the kids we're advocating for are in tier two or tier three," said Watson.

Tier One students are doing okay. There are no major problems happening in their lives. They're adjusting well. Whatever challenges they're experiencing are easily remedied.

Tier two kids are struggling to the point that it's obvious. Often with mental health.

"That one ties in with everything," said Watson. "If they're struggling with mental health, more often than not they will also be struggling with academics. Most of our Tier 2 students were doing well, but all of a sudden their circumstances changed. It's often first noticeable with attendance issues. That's what usually gets them on our radar. In that situation, we'll always visit their home and check on their well-being and find out why they're suddenly not coming to school."

Oftentimes, a struggling family doesn't know who to turn to for help. We let the family know that we will be their voice in the district and an advocate for their student. After Student Support Services gets involved, they contact the student's teachers, principal, coaches and administrators in the school so everyone is aware of what's happening.

"In those situations, we let the family know that we are there to help them," said Watson. "That's where our advocacy comes in."

Tier 3 students have substance abuse infractions, high level behavior issues (such as violence, threats of violence and suicide ideations), students with on-campus suspensions, and homeless students.

Student Support Services has two qualified counselors on staff – Sharon Watson and Sam Cochran – who are often brought in to provide counseling for Tier 3 cases.

Cochran came to Student Support Services in October 2024. Prior to that, he worked at Encompass Health Services as a counselor doing individual, couples, family and group counseling. He also did a year of crisis counseling with them.

"I enjoy it here, and I really hope I'm making a positive contribution to our community," he said. "I enjoy working with the kids. Some of our kids go through a lot in school and they have a lot going on at home so there can be a lot

of drama and sometimes trauma too."

Cochran tries to center his role more around prevention, than intervention.

As much as he enjoys his job and takes pride in the work he does, helping kids who are dealing with trauma can be hard.

"Some days are hard. Sometimes I'll pick up some of that vicarious trauma. You got to be careful and set boundaries and take intermittent breaks in between."

Student Support Services offers way more than a voice for the students in their care. They also provide a lot of physical support as well, in the form of food, clothing, and sometimes monetary assistance. If a student knows they'll be absent for a while longer, Student Support Services can get homework and class assignments from the student's teachers and take it to them at home.

The assistance provided by Student Support Services is in high demand all year long, but there are four times a year when they are particularly busy. At the beginning of the school year, Student Support Services visits each family on its rolls and conducts a wellness checks. During these checks, they learn if students living in the house are in need of school supplies, clothing, toiletries or anything else.

In the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving, Student Support Services collects from the community turkeys, canned goods and dry goods and delivers the goods for Thanksgiving to the families in their care. This year they delivered 99 turkeys and the trimmings to 99 families.

The weeks leading up to Christmas is another very busy time of year for Student Support Services. They collect coats, toys, gift cards and food items. In some cases, SSS has families they sponsor for Christmas, and they deliver the items to the families. In some cases, the families come to the SSS offices and pick up the items. The students and families can also create Christmas wish lists with Student Support Services and request very specific things.

Student Support Services partners closely with the community during the holiday season. Many of their community partners do their own drives for canned food, coats, gloves, toys and other items. In the weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas the goods are delivered to Student Support Services multiple times each day. The goods are then sorted, organized and stored.

It's extremely busy, hectic, bustling time; almost too much to keep up with. But for Brenlita Cly-Whitehorse, office clerk for Student Support Services, it's one of her favorite parts of the year.

"I love it," she said. "I love helping families and seeing the joy we can bring them. One of the parents came in and she was so happy she cried. She had come to us a few weeks earlier and told us she couldn't get gifts for her kids.



When she came back we had food and gifts for her kids. A few days later we even took a Christmas tree and decorations to their house."

The storeroom – as big as a classroom – contains shoes, shirts, pants and dresses in sizes newborn to adult. There are even dresses and suits for prom, dresses and suits for graduation, dresses and suits for job interviews. The room also stores sleeping bags, blankets and mattress, bottled water and non-perishable food, household items such as toilet paper, laundry detergent and shampoo.

"If a family needs something that we don't have, we can usually get the funds to get it for them," said Watson.

Student Support Services plays a vital role in the success of some of PUSD's most vulnerable students.

"Some of our kids and families face some big challenges, but most of them aren't forever," said Watson. "Most of the time we can help them through the rough part, get back on track, graduate and go on to have great lives. I'm glad we're here to help. My team does a fantastic job and they make a lot of lives better."

Employees of the Month

Certified Employee of the Month

November 2025



Scott Pulham

Classified Employee of the Month

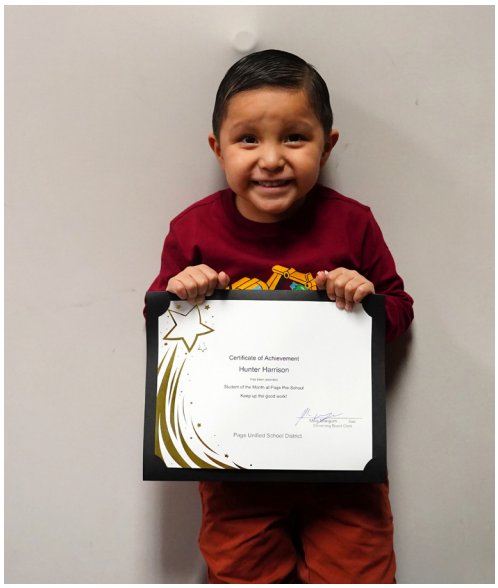
November 2025



Logan Beam

NOVEMBER

Students of the Month



Hunter Harrison
Page Preschool



Sienna Manygoats
Page Early Childhood Learning Center



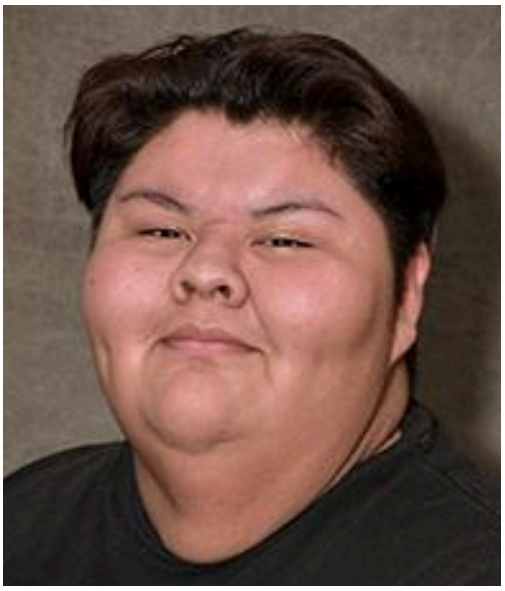
Malik Ranger
Page Elementary



River Richardson
PHS Jr. High

Photo Not Available

Joseph Boonie
PHS Sr. High



Dante Thompson
Manson Mesa High School