



Ukiah Junior Academy

# Grapevine

July 13, 2020

## **A Letter from Mr. Nelson**

Dear UJA Parents,

It is time for some introductions! My name is Rick Nelson and I am your new principal and Grades 7-8 home room teacher. It is an honor to be here and begin the process of becoming a part of this community. My wife is Debbie Nelson and she will be the 1st Grade teacher here at UJA. Let me tell you a little about ourselves.



We both began our teaching career at Templeton Hills SDA School on the California central coast. We were the only two teachers in that school before we were able to add an additional teacher a few years later. I taught the upper grades and Debbie the lower. We stayed there for seven years and then found ourselves, much to our surprise, in Las Vegas. I taught Math and Science in grades 7-10 as well as English, Bible and History in grades 9-10 at Las Vegas Junior Academy. Debbie taught 1st grade in the

Clark County School District in Las Vegas for two years before we adopted our daughter, Charity, in 1997. After living in Las Vegas for five years we moved to Chico, CA in the summer of 2000. I became the principal and Upper Grades teacher at Chico Oaks Adventist School. I continued in that position for 18 years as our family grew with our adoption of Isaac in 2003 and the birth of our surprise, Micah, in 2006. Debbie was the Director at Chico Oaks Preschool during many of those years. Two years ago we moved to the Salem, Oregon area and I took a position as Grades 7-8 teacher at Livingstone Adventist Academy. While I fully intended to stay at LAA for many years, it became apparent that God had other plans. He answered our prayers by arranging for the both of us to once again work together here at UJA. We are thrilled to be here! We love Northern California!

Over the next five weeks before school is scheduled to start again I hope to meet with as many of you as possible. I would love to find a quiet spot outside and chat with you. I want to hear how you are doing in the middle of this very strange time we are in and get to know a bit about you and your family. I want to hear about your hopes and concerns as we work toward getting our school year started. Our goal is to begin the school year with five full days of classroom instruction in the safest way possible and I want to have a conversation with each of you about what that can look like for your children. Expect a phone call sometime in the next month from either myself or our new Office Manager, Allison Kurtz, to schedule our get together. I'm really looking forward to meeting you all!

God bless,

Rick Nelson, Principal  
Ukiah Junior Academy

## **Our New Office Manager, Allison Kurtz**

The next time you visit the school office, expect to be warmly greeted by Allison Kurtz with her friendly smile. She brings Sunshine to the school.

She has lived her whole life in this beautiful valley, so her roots go down deep. Allison began her educational venture as a Kindergartner right here at UJA and went clear through the 10th grade. She finished high school at Rio Lindo Adventist Academy. She graduated from Pacific Union College in 2009 with a B.S. in Film and Television.

Allison has spent the last decade managing busy professional offices and now, we are so excited that she has joined the staff at UJA. We welcome her with open arms.

Some of you may not be aware that as an artist, she has been teaching a group of twelve how to pencil draw and to paint with watercolors. She also instructed the Pathfinders in their pursuit to complete the Drawing Honor.

Another fascinating news item about Allison is her love for unusual pets, especially the creepy, crawly ones. Her menagerie changes continually, but currently, these are the ones she's caring for. Beginning with the ordinary, she owns two poodles, a standard and a mini that she named Bartimaeus and, coincidentally, he became blind when he was four. Allison loves her five snakes: an Indigo, a pair of Kenyan sand boas, an albino Honduran milk snake, and a Texas rat snake, which is the moodiest one. She also has an African leopard tortoise, and a colony of hissing cockroaches.

For as long as she can remember, she has always been attracted to animals and critters that most people detest, so, kids, be sure to share with Ms. Kurtz your extraordinary creatures, because you won't be able to freak her out.



