Firebird Marching Band excels in fall competitions

The Phoenix Central School District’s rich music tradition marched on this fall season as its marching band participated in several competitions against neighboring schools. Fifty-one student musicians have suited up for the Firebirds this season while battling opposing bands and encountering the many challenges of playing during a pandemic. In the face of adversity, the Phoenix contingent thrived and won its first three competitions under the direction of John Bird.

“Making music together in any capacity is a win for any of our groups in the district,” Bird said. “What the students have done goes beyond making music. They are taking their craft to a different level.”

According to Bird, the band’s success is the result of a work ethic unlike any he has ever seen. That effort, coupled with a strong senior class, has yielded dividends throughout the season.

“This is the hardest working group that I have ever worked with,” he said. “They are also the nicest kids on the planet. We have some great senior leadership and that makes a huge difference.”

In addition to dedicated students, Bird lauded the community effort that has made the marching band program such a success.

“If it weren’t for the generous support from our administration, board members, parents, bus drivers, my staff and volunteers, none of this would be taking place,” Bird said. “We here in Phoenix have the absolute best support system. It’s truly the best place to work.”

Phoenix student-athletes resilient during fall sports season

After a series of challenges last fall navigating high school athletics during a pandemic, nearly 230 Firebird student-athletes were up to the task once again this season.

“Our kids and coaches have been extremely resilient and have overcome a lot, from losing games to losing players due to COVID-19 protocols,” said John Jeffries, PCSD’s Director of Health, Physical Education and Athletics. “They do not look at things like they did before; they are just happy and excited to be playing again.”

The district was able to roster 16 teams at the modified, JV and varsity levels this fall. Student-athletes had the opportunity to participate in football, cheerleading, soccer, tennis, cross-country, golf and volleyball.

“It’s extremely important to have fall sports once again,” Jeffries said. “It brings a sense of normalcy to the kids and allows them to play sports they have missed out on. It is also great for their mental health right now, especially in these difficult times.”

For Jeffries, having that sense of normalcy in the face of adversity has been rewarding. He noted that he has enjoyed seeing the athletes “in their element” and thriving.

“The best part is watching and providing kids an opportunity to do something they love,” Jeffries said. “It’s been awesome to see all their smiling faces, and we are hoping to build on that momentum for the next season!”
August graduates earn recognition

The Phoenix Central School District Board of Education honored its August graduates during a ceremony prior to a recent meeting. Family members gathered with district administrators and BOE representatives to congratulate Justin Clark and Rebecca Coon (pictured below) for achieving the milestone.

Welcome to the Firebird family!
PCSD employees earn recognition for milestone service

The Phoenix Central School District recently recognized its longtime staff members who celebrated milestone years of service to the Firebird school community.

During a staff development day in early September, 30 district employees were lauded for their dedication to the PCSD. The honorees have a combined total of 605 years of service to Phoenix schools.

The following employees were recognized for 15 years of service: Cathy Crutchley, Brian DeLong, Nicole George, Meagan Keib, Lorena LaBrake, Jill Lunn, Justin McArthur, Mary Paye and Joanna Young.

Celebrating 20 years of service were: Helen Abbott, Chris Byrne, Tanya Conklin, Maureen Kelly, Connie Deshaies, Laurie Doss, Jennifer LaBrake, Tim McMonagle, Cathy Nelson, Tami Noel, Allison Stevenson and Andy Quirk.

The 25-year milestone employees were: Lisa Balles, Bob Bryant, Bill Carvel, Chuck Chawgo, Debbie Dufour, Cheryl Connelly, Marla Leitner and Colleen Longley.

To round out the milestones, Terri Adams was recognized for her three decades of service as a special education teacher.

EJD Middle School welcomes Martin as its assistant principal

With a wealth of experience in education, Jason Martin is eager to make an impact on students at Emerson J. Dillon Middle School as the new assistant principal.

Martin earned masters’ degrees in liberal studies and arts in education, and he holds a Certificate of Advanced Study from Syracuse University. He also obtained professional teaching certificates in a variety of areas, including as a building leader and district leader. He joins the Phoenix Central School District team after serving as a seventh through 12th grade principal at OCM BOCES.

“I was drawn to Phoenix because of its excellence in education and student achievement,” Martin said. “The students and families are amazing to work with. I appreciate the family atmosphere of the Firebird community.”

Throughout the year, Martin will be working closely with Principal Jessica Ariola and the Student Services team to help support students and families.

He noted that he is focused on creating connections that will benefit the entire school community.

“My goal is to build relationships with students, families, staff and community stakeholders,” Martin said. “I want to carry out and model the vision and mission of the Phoenix Central School District.”

Critelli-Locke joins Phoenix schools as MAM assistant principal

The 2021-22 school year is underway at Michael A. Maroun Elementary School with a new assistant principal at the helm.

Stephanie Critelli-Locke joins the MAM administrative team from OCM BOCES, where she served as a building principal. In addition to her previous administrative duties, she also spent 13 years in the classroom as a fifth-grade teacher for the DeRuyter Central School District.

“I am honored to have the opportunity to be part of a school district that is committed to student success, relationships and community engagement,” Critelli-Locke said of her new role in Phoenix. “As the assistant principal, it is important to me that everyone who steps through our doors is excited to be here. That attitude enables us to meet the challenges of academic success in a fun and nurturing environment.”

Critelli-Locke noted she aims to foster student success and build relationships by being available to students throughout the building. She said she is engaging in meaningful conversations with students in the cafeteria, classrooms and as they enter the building each day. For the new assistant principal, those daily interactions have been a highlight of the initial few weeks.

“The best part of being a Firebird is the excitement and enthusiasm each day,” she said. “Students are filled with smiling faces as they enter the building welcomed by balloon arches, taking pictures with classmates, and sharing a meal in the cafeteria. I look forward to getting to know everyone in the weeks and years to come.”
Mission Statement
The Phoenix Central School District is committed to a challenging educational program that promotes academic and personal growth for all students. Each student will become a confident, productive, responsible individual with a strong academic foundation, and the ability to make positive ethical choices. Our goal is to cultivate a sense of pride, character, and accountability in our students and community. The Board of Education, staff, parents, students, and community share responsibility for this mission.

A Message from the Superintendent: Welcome Back to School!

On behalf of the Phoenix Central School District Board of Education, administration, faculty and staff, it is my pleasure to welcome everyone back for the start of the 2021-2022 school year.

It has been wonderful seeing all of our students back in person and on campus this year. The first month has gone extremely well, minus a few minor bumps and COVID-19. I have thoroughly enjoyed seeing students in our classrooms eager to learn and teachers excited to provide them with high-quality instruction. I have also enjoyed watching our athletic teams and marching band compete!

We recognize that the last year and a half have been difficult on all of us for a variety of reasons. We will make sure that all of our students and staff are closely monitored and cared for this year. Please know that our Student Services Department is here and ready to provide support to you and your family and will assist you in making connections with community organizations anytime necessary. You may contact any of our school’s main offices or go to our district website at www.phoenixcsd.org for their contact information.

I am very excited and looking forward to a wonderful school year full of student achievements and accomplishments. We will continue to support one another and our students as we navigate through this pandemic. And as we do, I am confident we will emerge as a stronger school community.

Thank you very much for your ongoing support of the Phoenix Central School District! Stay well and stay safe.

Sincerely,
Christopher J. Byrne
Superintendent
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@cbynepcsd

The Phoenix Central School District Board of Education, its officers and employees, shall not discriminate against any student, employee, or applicant on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, religion, marital status, sex, age, or disability. This policy of nondiscrimination includes: access by students to educational programs, counseling services for students, course offerings and student activities, recruitment and appointment of employees and employment pay, benefits, advancement and/or terminations.