

Hanna: RWOP responds to alliance of PUSD, The Launch Pad

Talk of the Town

SHERRIE HANNA, Special to the Courier

This is in response to the July 26 Courier article, "PUSD, Republican Women of Prescott at odds over alliance with The Launch Pad Teen Center."

The Republican Women of Prescott (RWOP) celebrates its 80th anniversary this year. As an organization, we are respected and well established in this community, and have been since 1942. RWOP's Mission Statement is to educate and inform, which not only empowers our members, but benefits our community as well.

RWOP President Sherrie Hanna and Past President Linda Nichols presented a written request in a letter from the RWOP Executive Board to Deb Dillon, president of the Prescott Unified School District (PUSD) Governing Board on June 16, 2022, to be placed on the PUSD Board meeting's July 12 agenda. The purpose of the request to speak with the Governing Board members was to have our questions answered concerning PUSD's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with The Launch Pad. RWOP made this request professionally and followed PUSD's procedures to be placed on the board's agenda.

The request was prompted by many RWOP members who had received an email announcing a Q-Prom, Drag Make-up and Runway Event for teens age 12 to 18 that was held at The Launch Pad. In addition, RWOP member concerns included questionable information in a Diversity Pamphlet from The Launch Pad promoted to Prescott High School (PHS) parents. RWOP values its excellent relationship with PUSD and its administrators, however, after a discussion with Dillon, District Superintendent Joe Howard and District Human Resources Director Clark Tenney, they denied RWOP's request.

RWOP recognizes that The Launch Pad provides a service for the youth in our community. We do not dispute that fact, nor are we disparaging them. However, the recent Q-Prom flyer that was sent out from The Launch Pad via email and the Diversity Pamphlet that was promoted to parents in the

Prescott High School Parent Bulletin, clearly indicates The Launch Pad and PUSD have taken a public direction that has not previously been seen.

If you read the MOU, which can be accessed on RWOP's website (RWOP.info), it provides The Launch Pad increased presence and involvement in Mile High Middle School and Prescott High School. The MOU mentions that the PUSD Administration will oversee The Launch Pad's involvement; who specifically in the PUSD Administration is in charge? Will the PUSD Administration guarantee that no Social Emotional Learning agendas will be promoted by The Launch Pad in the PUSD school system? These are two of several of the questions we were hoping to receive answers to had we been given the opportunity to be placed on the July 12 agenda. It is our opinion, by denying us to be placed on the agenda, the Governing Board did not want to answer our questions regarding its relationship with The Launch Pad, especially since the board has given so much flexibility to an outside organization to come into our public schools.

RWOP believes that PUSD's goal, in our local education system, should be to emphasize academics and not be pursuing Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs at the expense of academic studies, which may put our students at a disadvantage when they graduate and enter the workforce. Per Arizona Report Card 2021, Prescott Unified School District's student proficiency test scores reveal our students are below average in academics with 45% proficiency in English language arts, 34% in math, while 28% of students are chronically absent.

RWOP supports all students and wants the best for each one in their quest for academic excellence. Since 2015, RWOP has provided 79 scholarships to local students in the tri-city area totaling \$105,000 to date. Our support for the youth in our community as well as our local school system is evident. In addition, RWOP's 1,016 members includes current and retired educators who are well respected in their chosen field. RWOP understands a good teacher can inspire hope, ignite the imagination, and instill a love of learning. RWOP believes that teaching is a very noble profession that shapes the future of an individual.

Recently, RWOP hosted two Parent Empowerment forums. The public was invited to attend. Questions regarding CRT and SEL, which are seen

infiltrating schools across the nation, were answered. We are bound by the bylaws of RWOP, the Arizona Federation of Republican Women and the National Federation of Republican Women to support only Republican candidates seeking office, even in nonpartisan elections. The 2022 PUSD Governing Board Republican candidates were given an opportunity to speak at both events. These events were well received, and representatives from PUSD and The Launch Pad were in attendance.

Again, we are former educators, school administrators, parents and grandparents who care deeply about the children, the future and our country. We believe that the goal, as we see it in our school system, should be to equip our students with a strong academic foundation. Pursuing social emotional programs in the face of failing proficiency scores only sets our students up to fail.

Additional documentation referenced in this column can be found at RWOP.info. If you have questions or comments, please submit them on the Feedback link under the Education tab or use the RWOP Contact form on the website.

Sherrie Hanna, the 2022 president of the Republican Women of Prescott, submitted this column on behalf of the RWOP Executive Committee.