



ALONZO'S NEWS -

A PERIODIC LOOK AT WHAT ALONZO IS UP TO

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Life Lessons Learned – Sculpting Young Minds By Henry J. Barone

Have you ever been inspired by someone to the point where it changes the way you think and feel about the world? Well, this happened to me in my fifth grade year at Lyons Elementary with a few of my fellow students. It all started in fifth grade during our Human Rights Unit. Specifically, we were learning about how people with disabilities have also had to fight for fair treatment in our country. This is how we were introduced to Alonzo Clemons, Sculpture Savant.

Mr. Clemons came and spoke to our fifth grad class about the challenges of his life after having a brain injury at the age of three. This trauma changed his life forever in a powerful way. He became a sculpture savant. A savant is someone whose brain works in such a way that they become outstandingly gifted in one subject of thinking. For Alonzo Clemons it is sculptures. He works mainly on big mammals, but the Great Spanish Bull is his favorite to sculpt. As crazy as it sounds, we saw that in a matter of minutes he could produce an amazing sculpture from memory. Although his accident caused Alonzo severe mental and physical challenges, this trauma also gave him the gift of being a sculpture savant and the world has embraced his artistic gift with a new acceptance for people with disabilities.

After meeting Alonzo, we started thinking about how we should support his artwork and raise money to purchase a sculpture of his. After many conversations at lunch and recess, we came up with the idea of a Legacy Project for our school. We had lots of scattered ideas about how to raise money for this sculpture. We then proposed this idea to our principal, Andrew Moore. He then asked us to talk to the PTO. We scheduled a meeting with the PTO and proposed our idea. By now we had decided that the sculpture should be a mountain lion, because it's our school mascot and it represents that Lyons, CO is full of strong people. The PTO decided that they would give us money and their support. Also, they gave us the idea of going to different businesses in Lyons, especially the Lyons Arts and Humanities Council. During our presentation, the LAHC along with the Craig Ferguson of Planet Bluegrass promised to support our efforts.

Now we were ready to ask Alonzo Clemons if he would make us a mountain lion sculpture, and if he would make it, how much money it would cost. A small group of fifth graders then contacted Alonzo's secretary and asked her if he would create the statue. She wrote back that the process would be for us to raise our money and then he would create the sculpture according to the funding we were able to raise. Now that we had raised our money in the community, we asked all the fifth graders to contribute at least five dollars to the sculpture. Our idea worked, and we finally had enough money to commission the sculpture. Alonzo said that the statue would be ready by the fall of our sixth grade year, and now it is finally on display at Lyons Elementary School.

I learned two big life lessons from this project. First, even though you are a kid, if you set your mind to something, you can accomplish most anything. Second of all, never judge someone on how they look or any apparent disability you think you see. We all have amazing strengths and talents to contribute to our world. I am so grateful that I was able to learn about Mr. Clemons and meet such an inspirational person at a young age.