



The Yellow Ribbon

By Nancy Shonamon, Christian School Representative

As the clock ticked away the moments until my students would arrive, I thought about the journey that brought me to this moment. About a year ago, the phone rang with a voice asking, “Will you come and help us start a Christian school?”

With 30 years of experience as an educator and administrator, every logical sense in me should have boldly proclaimed a resounding, “NO!” Mildly stated, it is an enormous task to start a school from scratch. There would be no business proposals, policies developed, solicitations for donations, gathering of equipment, or branding. Additionally, who could spare those endless hours needed toward marketing!

Preparation

However, I could not ignore the Spirit assuring me that this was indeed the next step the Lord wanted me to take. And so, it began. After months of preparing, gathering supporters, and developing plans, it became apparent the school would need to have at least twelve students enrolled to “break even” financially.

Two months before the school’s opening, the pastor and I were shopping for furniture. As we made our way to the storage area, we began discussions about how many portable lockers we should purchase.

Normally, this would not be a hard question, but with only two months before the big grand opening, we had only one student enrolled. That is right....ONE!

Trying not to let my heart sink, I timidly suggested we begin to pray for five students to enroll before the first day of school. My pastor wholeheartedly embraced the idea. Together we purchased five bins for the students who *would* be coming to our new school, and we prayed.

One month later, we enrolled our second student. As the clock continued to count down, we kept praying. Three weeks before school started, no one else had enrolled. We prayed. Two weeks before school started, a family inquired about enrolling their two sons. And the clock kept ticking. Finally, *the day before* school started, we enrolled our fifth student.

Opening Day!

The first day of school was finally here. Glancing at the clock one more time, I announced, "Here we go!" A handful of students and their parents trailed behind me as we headed to the new classroom. Rounding the corner in the hall, the parade stopped in front of a yellow ribbon strung across the hall. I had the honor of explaining this moment and how special it felt that they were the *very first students* at Shawnee Nazarene Academy. With joy and thanksgiving, we pulled out large scissors and cut the long yellow ribbon, knowing that the journey the Lord started was only just beginning.

Nancy Shonamon lives in Shawnee, Kansas. She is the principal of the new Shawnee Christian Academy in Shawnee, Kansas. Previously, Nancy has served as elementary teacher, academic advisor, and assistant principal at the Nazarene Christian Academy in Fort Worth, Texas. You may contact Nancy at snshomamon@gmail.com.