“Inside MSD15” Episode 9

TITLE: Meet Our New Principal

Welcome back to Inside MSD15. We're so grateful to have you join us for another episode of the podcast. This is an opportunity for us to open the doors of our schools and welcome you back for warm, informal, and honest conversations. There are so many positive learning moments across the District. We are very grateful for the opportunity to chat more about them.

Today, we're talking to someone you may have had the pleasure of meeting so far this year. She is the newest principal in Marquardt School District 15, and we are very lucky to welcome her on board. Her name is Janet Gruenwald and she is the principal of Reskin Elementary.

Let's jump right into that!

Lindsey: Hi Janet and welcome to Inside MSD15! Thanks for coming today.

Janet: Thanks for having me! I'm so excited to be here.

Lindsey: First, I would love to give you the opportunity to introduce yourself to the MSD15 community. Tell us a bit about yourself!

Janet: Sure, I was actually born and raised in this area. I grew up in Streamwood and stayed close to home in Hoffman Estates. I have two girls at home. I have a daughter who is a senior at Loyola and then I have my youngest Molly who is a junior at Schaumburg. In fact, I married my high school sweetheart. We're approaching our 25th wedding anniversary, which is kind of mind-blowing and crazy, but also amazing. We are big on family, big on spending time together. Definitely some kind of movie family. So, we're going to spend the Thanksgiving break watching the new Black Panther movie together when my daughter gets home, so lots of movies with our family.

Professionally and educationally, I began my career over 20 years ago. I graduated with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, so my first job was working with special education preschoolers in a self-contained, blended setting, and then I discovered a passion for teaching children to read, so i went back and got my master's degree in reading as well as my national board certification and went on to teach second grade and became a reading specialist for a long time and then kept that passion for reading and became a reading coach literacy in the Deerfield area and I did it for an incredibly long time before I got my MBA and moved into management because I really wanted to take part of that passion to support kids and develop as learners and really work at a higher level. tall with the staff and a whole school of kids to help everyone learn and grow and build community. So, that's a little bit about how I ended up here.

Lindsey: Your experience is so impressive from an educational standpoint, but I also love hearing personal tidbits about you. I think that's fascinating, especially the high school love part. This is my favorite question to get to know you... what is the last book you read?

Janet: So I think the last noteworthy book I read that's not an educational book is written by Trevor Noah called "Born a Crime" so if you're familiar with Trevor Noah who hosts the daily show or is in the final driving stages of the daily show, he wrote a really great autobiography that I highly recommend.

Lindsey: We are recording this podcast in November, and this is your first school year with Marquardt School District 15. What has been your highlight so far?

Janet: I think I'll probably meet everyone in this district. It's always hard to leave the district you're familiar with and come to a new place, even when you're excited for the adventure and every single person I've met here has been amazing and supportive from the District office and all the other principals who have hugged me and are very supportive of my new assistant principal, Mary Hamilton, we hit it off really well and we just jumped in and started together. The staff, the community, the families, everyone has been so welcoming and supportive and it's been really great.

Lindsey: You have had some time to start the school year and provide support for students and staff to start the school year on a strong note. Now that you have had time to reflect, what are your main goals and priorities for the future?

Janet: Going into Reskin, we have new management across the board. The assistant principal is new, I am new and coming out of the pandemic... this is probably the closest year to normal we've had since lockdown. I think one of the things that goes along with that is a lot of things stopped. You know? We stopped being able to have events, we couldn't bring parents, so we also have our amazing parent clubs that are rebuilding this year and it's almost like we're in this renaissance period. Our theme this year is “We are Reskin” because we are a building made up of students and families from many different cultures and backgrounds and a lot of diversity, and we want to embrace that and discover who we are as a school. What traditions did we have before the pandemic? What do we want to bring back? What makes us unique? How do we find out who we are and how are we going to celebrate that and how do we move on now that we're back to normal? And what will that normality be for us? That is my big goal. As a school, as a community, as a family at Reskin finding out who we are and what does that look like in our building?

Lindsey: I had the pleasure of coming to Reskin and seeing the first Reskin Walk a Thon. Can you tell us a bit about that?

Janet: Again, just a big thank you to our boosters that we haven't really had a parent booster group for a few years now. So one of their goals is to rebuild who they are as well. So we know other buildings have had Walk a Thons and they're really powerful and we decided we wanted to do that as well as an opportunity to start the year to get the whole school together and support and raise some money and showcase our kids and start that opportunity with the drivers. They did an amazing job. They brought people from the community to support. We had a lot of parent attendance. The bubble machine was there. It was an argument between the bubble machine and our therapy dog ​​over who was more popular! It was a really good opportunity to start our boosters, rebuild, bring us back to school, and have that first event that put us back in the building as Reskin.

Lindsey: At the end of the day, what is the part of being a principal that makes you smile?

Janet: Our children and our staff. I can honestly say that every day I interact with our students in a very positive way and we truly have an amazing group of kids. I am so lucky to get to see them and work with them every day and meet them in the hallway and see them in the classrooms and just watch them grow as people and as students and I can also say from the bottom of my heart that Reskin has the most dedicated staff, understanding and fun to work with. And I'm lucky to have each of them as part of our Reskin family.

Lindsey: Thank you very much, Janet. We appreciate all you are doing at Reskin and beyond. You are a Rockstar and we are very grateful for your leadership.

Lindsey: And there you have it. Another episode of “Inside MSD15”. We would like to take a moment to thank the MSD15 Board of Education for their support. If you enjoyed this podcast, please like and subscribe to our channel and leave us a comment. If there's a topic you'd like to hear discussed, please let us know! Thanks again for listening.