

# **Granite City School Teachers Hold Successful Parade, Lifts The Spirits Of Students, Community In A Trying Year**

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer  
April 6 2020 11:21 AM



GRANITE CITY - It hasn't been the best of years for the Granite City School District. A severe thunderstorm that left the city flooded in late August delayed the start of the school year into mid-September, and currently, the statewide school closures mandated

because of the current COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic worldwide has disrupted the school year.

Last week, both the school district and the entire community had their spirits lifted when a total of 80 teachers from all levels of the district, along with a member of the Board of Education, led a parade through the streets of the city to let the students and community know that they were thinking of and expressing their gratitude for them.

And the parade was a resounding success, lifting the spirits of the very proud and resilient community at a time when it needed it the most.

The idea of a parade was first discussed by Frohardt Elementary Center third grade teachers Jamie Mihi and Courtney Brooks, along with retired Granite City police officer Jenna De Yong, who saw a Facebook posting of a similar event in Wentzville, Mo., in St. Charles County.

"The three of us saw a post on Facebook from Wentzville," Mihi said, "and we started joking amongst ourselves about we would do it if it got us out of the house. After that, we formed a Facebook group of Granite City teachers to see how the interest would be."

Mihi saw that the interest of having a parade was high, and passed the idea along to Superintendent Jim Greenwald.

"He gave us his absolute blessing," Mihi said.

"I received a call a few days ago from Jamie, and asked me if I would allow them to form the parade," Greenwald said. "I said yes, and to please keep me informed. I then called the TV stations, hoping to get positive coverage, which we did. It was a tremendous act of kindness by the teachers."

Mihi also passed the idea along to Granite City police chief Ken Rozell, who also gave the green light, and also gave permission for the school resource officers to lead the way.

The parade started out at the parking lot of the old K-Mart store off Nameoki Road, and split into two sections, using bus routes for both the Maryville and Wilson first and second grade centers, which feed into both the Frohardt and Mitchell third and fourth grade centers as a guidance for the parade routes, which guaranteed community-wide coverage.

The teachers decorated their own cars, which numbered over 100, and held signs up to show their support for their students and families. The parade also included board member Linda Knogl as an enthusiastic participant.

Greenwald also sent E-mails to the parents and students to announce the parade and its details, which assured that the students would be looking forward to seeing their teachers show their support for them

The event was a culmination of five hours worth of planning by Mihi, Brooks and De Yong.

"And it was worth every second," Mihi said with a laugh.

That it certainly was, as the students and their families showed their approval along the route, as car horns were honking all the way through. By all measures, the parade was a resounding success, and Greenwald couldn't have been any prouder of the teachers and staff for their participation.

"It's an extension of expressing their gratitude towards the children, and to let them know that they were thinking of them," Greenwald said. "It was a great community event. I have received tons of positive phone calls and feedback."

Mihi agreed that the parade made a very positive impact on the kids, who have been out of school since Mar. 17, and the entire shut-in community as well.

"Not only did it make an impact on the kids, we put smiles on every citizen," Mihi said. "So many kids were looking forward to it. It gave them some reassurance that everyone was alright."

The impact on the younger children was especially positive and encouraging.

"Especially the young kids, they don't understand what's going on," Mihi said. "School is like their safety net, their island of stability. I'm glad we were really able to reach out to them like this."

And the overall impact of the Granite City, a hard-working and proud community, was very positive, and the parade couldn't have come at a better time for the city.

"Granite's a place where we all persevere through the challenges," Mihi said. "It's been a rough year, but we hope we made the community feel good about themselves."

