

MILES: Hi everybody! Welcome back to our returning listeners, and welcome if it's your first time listening. We're so happy to have you with us today.

SHARON: Yes, we are. Thank you for joining us for the 4th episode of the lion pride-cast - A podcast created by the Lansing Unified School District 469 located here in Lansing KS.

MILES: The purpose of this podcast two former Lansing stake holders being our community members students and staff about all things education. We are your hosts - I'M Miles Azzeh, Director of Teaching and Learning in Lansing USD 469.

SHARON: I am Sharon Burns, the Director of Communications and Marketing Here.

MILES: So normally and this happened last time it should be this did happen last time – we share and you were able to talk quite a bit about recruitment and retention and communications, climate a culture.

SHARON: Right hopefully everyone listened to that.

MILES: Oh yeah, I'm sure everybody did. But this time instead of delving into a topic of education we are going to do our bi weekly interview. Two weeks ago we interviewed Dr Alan Penrose and he was very

SHARON: Two episodes ago.

MILES: Two episodes ago. Apologies apologies - two episodes ago, and he was very impressive. so saying about how amazing he was to put the gentleman that's with us today on the hot seat, not to make you a little too nervous or anything, but we actually have Mr. Martin Altieri.

SHARON: Yes, our new Intermediate School principal, so thank you very much Martin for being here.

MARTIN: Pleasure to be here.

MILES: Martin, did I say your last name right, Altieri?

MARTIN: Altieri.

SHARON: Oh is it not Altieri?

MILES: OK with a facial expression that USD viewers can't you see

SHARON: No really let's hear

MILES: it just looks like Altieri.

MARTIN: I think that Sharon, you're probably saying it the way it was pronounced in Italy.

SHARON: OK.

MARTIN: Maybe not so much the americanized version.

MILES: Bro, you gotta own that as a fellow Italian you have to own so it

SHARON: should it should be Altieri

MILES: I mean as far as I'm concerned.

SHARON: OK So what are we going with? Let's hear it from Martin.

MARTIN: Let's just go with Altieri. Keep it simple.

MILES: OK it was more simple as Altieri, but we'll go with that. Martin we're super excited to have you here today. Before we jump into everything though, Martin and tell the truth have you listened to our previous episodes?

MARTIN: I have.

MILES: Martin, are you - really?

MARTIN: I have.

SHARON: I may have twisted his arm a little bit.

MARTIN: I have about a 35 minute drive to work and so you know with a little bit of arm twisting.

SHARON: Yes, thank you Martin.

MILES: Listen to me I was coming on here - I needed to know what I was up against

SHARON: He knows my son goes to his school, so I know where to find him.

MILES: That's really funny. She just keeps showing up as says, have you listed yet? Have you listened yet? OK so you may remember we did this with Dr. Penrose, Alan, the principal at the high school. We'd like to kickoff with a little bit of a competition. Yeah, for our new listeners, number one- please listen to previous episode #2 we kick off with a competition. We should give a name for this. They're cheese puffs that we tossed toward our guests to see if they could catch him.

MARTIN: Cheese Puff Challenge.

SHARON / MILES: Cheese Puff Challenge.

SHARON: For the win.

Miles: yes way to go Mr. Altieri. Way to go. So yes cheese puff challenge. Alan did very well last time – got two out of 3 so 66% so you're gonna have to try to beat that

SHARON: And we've heard your athletic, so I feel like this should follow ...

MARTIN: In Sports, generally you're trying not to catch it with your face.

MILES: He's very good at chicken and pickle and we play soccer together - neither of those is he really actively trying to get his face involved so we'll see how this goes. Are you ready?

MARTIN: I'm ready.

MILES: OK so this is gonna be good. I'm gonna toss it to you and this is a practice one for both so you're ready and don't worry I'm not gonna do that silly thing like last time.

SHARON: Yeah just go.

MILES: Alright. The practice- You nailed it.

SHARON: OK.

MILES: Go ahead and chew I don't want you to choke before "Here's the next one!"

MARTIN: Sure, we don't want to make it that the first actual one.

SHARON: That was really good.

MILES: I mean the throw was on. I'm not allowed to talk about that it was like smalls or anything like that. So here goes. are you ready? Wow

SHARON: One. That's like solid too.

MILES: Sharon's got the tally OK OK I'm just gonna

MILES: Viewers - I wish you could see this. He chewed so fast. Yeah

MARTIN: I didn't eat lunch yet.

MILES: I just want you to know you don't need to eat so quickly. Let's take your time. I'm gonna wait till you chew and swallow. Well said. READY? Oh man. Yeah that was a little bit of an off throw too.

SHARON: I know I know.

MILES: 2 for 2 – Alan.

SHARON: You should get a bonus point

MILES: Yeah right, ready?

SHARON: Oh – that was your fault.

MILES: That's me that was me alright third one ready? Atta boy - 3 for 3

SHARON: It would be terrible if somebody choked.

MARTIN: I know, that was a swish.

SHARON: I heard it hit the back of his throat.

MILES: We're about to get an email from somebody being like, we sell liability insurance for podcasts. We notice that you do something that is extremely dangerous.

MARTIN: First person to ever have choked on a Cheese Puff.

MILES: Oh man, I don't know if – Sharon, hold on. There is a second part.

SHARON: No, no. Let's keep moving.

MILES: Are you serious? No, it's up to the guest. Would you like to toss one at us to see?

Martin: One each.

SHARON: OK OK.

MILES: Sharon, you go first.

SHARON: I don't think I have ever caught one.

MILES: Yes.

MARTIN: I mean, you won't get better if you don't try.

SHARON: OK that's true.

MILES: Well said.

MARTIN: Ooooooh!

MILES: She finally got one. She's chewing into the microphone to make sure everyone knows.

SHARON: I want them to hear it.

MILES: Alright alright. Pressure's off.

SHARON: That was Miles's fault.

MILES: That was absolutely not my fault.

SHARON: OK

MARTIN: Alright.

MILES: Hold hold. So the listeners know.

MARTIN: Well 5 for 5 could be some kind of record.

MILES: I'm not gonna lie. Ooo we should do that too, but alright that's a whole other thing. One more time the name of this challenge is the...

MARTIN: cheese puff challenge.

SHARON: Love it, ok.

MILES: And you are leading now.

SHARON: He's winning. Yep.

MILES: Well there'll be a special prize at the end of the year.

SHARON: OK.

MARTIN: Hopefully more cheesepuffs.

SHARON: Yeah that's true. Yeah we're just gonna give you the big thing of cheesepuff possibility the big container that we got. Yeah alright, so we're super happy that you're here for this

interview. This is a great chance for us to get to know you more. I know I I know you pretty well. It's a great chance for community members to get to know you, your staff to get to know you. But we're gonna kick off with kind of a fun question here before we you know kind of get into your background as an educator in what you believe in. We want to learn a little bit more about you, so we've got a couple questions here. We have one question you can choose which one to answer.

SHARON: This is the only one we have not given you beforehand.

MILES: Yes yes you have not been given this one. Martin has been given every one all the questions before.

MILES: Well, technically you you have heard these because you listen to the other so you know. We're learning folks so now we're gonna change your questions, but this is how you learn, right Sharon? But here are your four questions, OK? Tell us the funniest story about yourself as a high school student. Give some examples for for example could be like a senior prank. Tell us the most embarrassing thing that has happened to you in school. Talk to us about the meanest teacher you've had and why, or what was the most trouble you got into as a high school student? So funniest story about yourself as a high schooler, embarrassing thing that happened to you in school, meanest teacher and why, what was the most trouble you got into as a high school student?

MARTIN: OK well I actually got in trouble more as a middle school student so I think I'm gonna stick with your original one which is that you said high school prank.

SHARON: Oooo ok.

MILES: High school prank it could be your high school prank if you did one. Yes.

MARTIN: Yes so you know the football team and the baseball team had a little bit of a rivalry in high school, and I played baseball and so we kind of pull some pranks on each other - usually good-natured. But there was one where they they went a little bit tough not going to go into specifics on what it was OK, but we kind of returned the favor, so we when they had their football banquet, we made a platter of chocolate chip cookies.

MILES: Very kind of you.

SHARON: Uh oh. Oh no.

MARTIN: Well the only problem with that was we had actually taken some laxatives and it down and we had

MILES: Like the ex lax chocolate then the blue, Oh my.

MARTIN: So almost the whole football team was absent from school- now here's the kicker is none of them found it out until about two years after we graduated and then I gotta mean I gotta mean text message wanting to know why we did that so-

MILES: Just curious though, didn't they like realize they all got sick- I guess that's fine

MARTIN: They did, know did

MILES: I mean they did they know who did it? How did they find out?

MARTIN: Well so a lot a lot of a lot of them thought they got food poisoning.

SHARON: Yeah that's true, yes.

MILES: So how did they find out? You said two years later they found out.

MARTIN: I don't know.

MILES: You gotta

MARTIN: Yeah someone on the baseball team snitched.

MILES: Somebody stitched.

SHARON: This is such a guy thing. I'm sorry

MILES: What kinda prank would you do? Not that.

SHARON: Girls would not do that.

MILES: No?

SHARON: No.

MILES: OK. Maybe.

MARTIN: I mean girls would hold back longer.

SHARON: That's true- we wouldn't find the humor in it.

MILES: I'm like I'm the father of my chair. That's hilarious- wish I would have done that in high school. OK great answer by the way, OK bravo.

SHARON: Okay, so now we're gonna hit the real questions here - the nitty gritty. So tell us a little bit about your background. I know we did a story on you on the website, but where are you from, education...

MARTIN: So I am a Kansas City native. I grew up in Prairie Village, Kansas, and I went to Shawnee Mission East. And you know, it's interesting- even though it's definitely an affluent school, there's many areas that feed into it. I kind of came from more like the middle class area. And so you know much like my father before me, when I was getting towards the end of high school, I wanted to do something a little bit different than my classmates. So I actually joined the army. I enlisted before my senior year and just kind of did what I needed to do to graduate, and you know, did that for six years. Signed up for the GI bill 'cause I did wanna go to college at a later date - just didn't feel like it at that time I was ready to go to college. I guess I was mature enough to realize I wasn't ready.

SHARON: Right.

MARTIN: If that makes any sense, so I did that for six years- stationed in Hawaii, I got to see Germany, got to see about 15 different countries, one deployment to northern Iraq and then a couple deployments - more peacekeeping to the Philippines and to Thailand. So I got to do a lot of stuff, got to see a lot of things, which gave me a greater appreciation not just for the world but also for what we have in our own country.

SHARON: Right.

MARTIN: And so that kind of led me to what I wanted to be as a teacher, which was social studies, because I had seen a lot of stuff around the world. I always felt like there was a stereotype that if you're a social studies teacher, well what did you coach?

SHARON: Right.

MARTIN: It's true.

SHARON: It is true.

MARTIN: What did I coach? Well, actually nothing. And so it was nice to bring that stuff and to bring those personal experiences and kind of bring history and social studies alive and I think the students really like that I mean I would take him out on a cold winter day and march him around and seeing army cadence. We would study Valley Forge or we did World War One. I'd be out there teaching them how to low crawl across a field. We had some fun experiences.

MILES: Experiences.

MARTIN: Which is really in my opinion what education is all about, so and then did that for seven years taught middle school at Indian Woods. it's in the Shawnee Mission School District. I

went back and got my admin degree. It was was – I never had planned to do it but I've always kind of the philosophy of you know don't complain about things unless you have a solution and so some of the frustrations that I saw as a teacher- I was like I feel like we could do that better. So I went back, got my admin degree. I took a job actually to go from middle school to a K2 elementary at Fort Scott, which was a little bit of a transition and it gave me a really great appreciation for elementary school teachers, especially kindergarten. I don't know how they do it. I had to cover some kindergarten classes a few times and I felt like Arnold Schwarzenegger so but you know it gave me a great appreciation, not just for you know the different grade levels, but also a different community. Obviously to go from the city to a more rural area had different challenges, but you know, for as much as things change, a lot of them stay the same, and so it's just nice to learn different cultures, interact with different people, and then ironically when the Lansing job opened up it was always a place I had actually wanted to be. I had applied to Lansing to be a teacher way back when after I graduated from Emporia State and didn't get an interview, but I guess things turned out OK.

MILES: You just weren't good enough of that time. You got better so-

MARTIN: You know my journey to here I feel like I just last super happy to be here I feel like I have been blessed. I am super happy to be here.

SHARON: I think you're a great fit too - especially with the military background. You connect with kids that have that you know with their moving and you just have that experience which is nice here.

MILES: And I was joking. You were probably a great fit back then 'cause honestly- I you're, you're preaching to the choir when it comes to social studies. I have that background as well like we do get stuck in the like memorization or only caring about certain things or like it's all about experiences. It's all about understanding and connecting to the world. So you got to experience that living overseas and all that time visiting all those places so I love how you brought that back into the classroom.

MARTIN: Yeah, we used to I had some dinar. Saddam Hussein's face I brought back and the kids were like wow that's cool.

SHARON: Yeah

MARTIN: Kind of bring it alive

SHARON: Right, right.

MILES: Very cool. Thank you. So you talked a lot about how the experiences you had, especially post high school and and the work and the things that you that pound for pound made you want to be a teacher or go down that route, but did you have any teachers that had an impact

on you? Whether it be in high school or earlier age that maybe not necessarily even impact to become a teacher in the future but to instill things in you and what were those things?

MARTIN: You know when I look at this question, I did, I mean I had some good teachers you know. Some of them that had a big impact on my life. I will say though I wasn't the best student in high school, and I do think that made me a better educator though 'cause I could relate to some of those those students that struggle that weren't motivated. I would say though the biggest impact from an educator that I had was my middle school principal. And so here's the interesting part about this was I had him as a student when I went to Indian Hills middle school he was my principal there and he was also in the one that hired me for my first teaching job. And so I I already had known him. Like I knew a bit of background I remember he had said that he goes- Mr. Altieri that name is really familiar. This was in the interview. And I was like yeah yeah you know you know your name – his name was Jim Wink. I was like Mr Wink, you were you were my principle. Wou know what what I didn't tell him was I I think I was in his office a couple times as a student. So you know he was one who definitely led by example. He was passionate about helping build those relationships. I remember 'cause I was gonna go back. I was looking at programs at Baker University and I was just going to get a masters in teaching and he said to me, he goes, you know Martin, he goes, he always pushed me to be on building leadership teams, to take admin or to take leadership positions within the building and volunteer for them. He said you know why because you can go back and get that. He goes yes I think you should get a school leadership degree. He goes it'll open some new doors he goes, it doesn't mean you have to be a principle, but at least the option is there if you want to do it. He goes quite frankly he goes I think you'd be a good candidate for it. And so I took his advice in fact he was the first person I called when I got this job here.

SHARON: Really?

MARTIN: It was exciting to tell him that. You know he's a guy who was an admin for 42 years.

SHARON: Wow.

MARTIN: OK he's seen a lot.

MILES: That's right.

SHARON: Yeah. So then what would be your leadership style? Did you take stuff from from him?

MARTIN: A little bit, yeah. I would also say kind of my military background.

SHARON: OK.

MARTIN: So when I came into educational leadership, it wasn't my first role in leadership. I was a squad leader when I was in the military- very different you know in the military, it was leading

95% women- sorry 95% men and then I come to education especially elementary level and it's more like 95% women, so it's a different leadership style. But I would say the vast majority of things carry through to both. But I would say the biggest thing for me is leading by example. Probably one of the best leaders I had in the military I remember it was the first day - he was on the job and we were cleaning up we were working late we're getting ready to deploy so we're putting some late nights. And so we got down to the shop, were cleaning up, and normally you know he was pretty high-ranking he could just sit back and wait for us to get done cleaning but I noticed the first thing he did was he went and got a mop and start cleaning just like everyone else. I just remember thinking like, wow, he obviously cares enough about us that he's - nothing is above him.

SHARON: Right.

MARTIN: You know he wants us to get out of here too. He wants us to spend time with our families, and so for me that's what I want my staff to know is - there's nothing I would ask them to do that I wouldn't do myself.

Sharon: Yeah.

MILES: I love that. Yeah, we hear the word servant leadership all the time, but you - that story encapsulated it.

SHARON: Yeah, right.

MARTIN: And he used to say, and I believe this, he goes I don't want you to respect me for my rank or my title, because I want you to respect me for who I am and I think that that speaks volumes.

SHARON: Yeah, yeah.

MILES: So let's shift a little bit more to Lansing as a whole. What's something about our district that stands out or has clicked with you? Not necessarily at the Intermediate School, you know you've obviously have been spending a lot of time there leading it, but you've been into quite a few meetings at the district level. You've been around in other buildings. I believe you went to homecoming football game on Friday

SHARON: He did!

MILES: Thanks for coming out that night. Yeah, so what's something that's kind of clicked or stood out to you in this district?

MARTIN: I I think a lot of it is kind of you still have this small town feel - very community oriented. I mean when you go to some of these events, you can feel the pride that the people in this community have for things like homecoming - their schools, you know sporting events, but

you can just feel that passion, and I remember that was something that going to a big high school in a huge city - I I didn't really feel that and I remember when I went to Fort Scott it was it was very similar to Fort Scott, you know you have the firemen come out to the things, you have you know people who have grown up in the community that have attended football games or you know basketball whatnot for like 40-50 years. You know their kids have grown up and gone on to other areas. They still come back for the games, so I think that's pretty exciting and so I remember when I was looking at potential jobs, like Lansing checked all those boxes. They have a small town community - people invest in education in giving back obviously you guys mentioned that you have the military influence so that was exciting to me and just ah you know it was something that I enjoyed my time in the military but this gives me the opportunity to also to give back to that community as well as to Lansing - to those students who are military families kind of understand some of the struggles and challenges they face.

SHARON: Right.

MARTIN: So it's it's nice to to be part of the military community again.

SHARON: What do you want your lasting impact to be here in Lansing?

MARTIN: I mean I would say the biggest thing for me is that students kind of remember Lansing Intermediate as an intersection of learning and fun. To me that you can you can do both at the same time.

SHARON: Right.

MARTIN: And you know the biggest thing for me is I don't think they're gonna remember the assignments they did or maybe the grades they had. I think they're going to remember some of the personal interactions they had with their teachers or staff, you know, interactions with me, whether you know it might be you know greeting them at the morning every day and giving them a fist bump. I had a student that I went to give a pump and he turned around to give me a big hug. Things like that. You know, I want the students to- I think there's a lot of times when you're in a school where you're only here for two years, and it feels almost like a stopgap - they're here and they're on, but I want them for those two years to have good memories of it and to be able to look back on it and say hey it wasn't, you know, this was a part of my life that was meaningful, that I enjoyed, and that you know they make great friends and relationships.

SHARON: We talked about that during our last episode. Yeah. Experiences.

MILES: Well thank you very much for all those answers. You know it's apparent you're an extremely genuine person.

SHARON: Yeah.

MILES: That's one thing I like about you. Sharon, you must be happy, because brooks goes –

SHARON: I know, I've got a fifth grader who's experiencing this... and and Mufasa, which I hope you're going to talk about him at some point.

MARTIN: I will talk about Mufasa.

MILES: Brooks is fistbumpin'. Two weeks in a row.

SHARON: Yeah, we get to mention Brooks. He likes when we talk about him in the podcast.

MILES: You're welcome Brooks. So um, one thing that we wanted to talk about is the purpose of this podcast is to get to know, you know, provide new learning and more information to listeners- get to know more about people. But I wanna hear from you, what are some ways that you continue to grow? What are some things that you do? I know you and I for example were in the greenbush district leadership Academy. But what are what are what are other things that you do to try to grow as a leader or as a principle, or just as a person?

MARTIN: Other than listening to The Pride-Cast? Correct?

SHARON: Yes, thank you.

MILES: Bravo.

SHARON: That's right at the top.

MILES: Dinner on me after- Danny's on me after soccer next week.

MARTIN: You know, as Miles touched on. I think, you know, I worked with Greenbush not just in Lansing, but also at Fort Scott- and I think they're a top notch organization. I was very excited to hear that Lansing partners with them as well. I've gone through the building leadership Academy a few years before. I got a lot out of it. I think it it helped me become the leader but I am now so when I was able to sign up for the district leadership one, I think I was excited about it it's to learn new things. I think if you understand the job and responsibilities that your immediate supervisor you know like you know Mr Dan Wessel has I think it makes you better at your own job and you understand those challenges. I do you know I study a lot of history being social studies major in the past. I think there's a lot you can learn from history. You know in leadership and in education you know principals have faced challenges like this before. So you know there's a lot of a lot of books out there that you can learn things from. I remember one that I read is leading like a pirate. That was an interesting one and I know there's one I'm reading now Focus by Michael Schmoker.

MILES: Oh, I've heard that's a good book.

MARTIN: Highly recommended within the district.

MILES: Yeah- people like people like that. I'll have to give it a shot.

MARTIN: You'll have to check that out.

MILES: New listeners are like what are you- What's happening right now? That was awkward.

MARTIN: That was actually a book that Miles - he gave to many of our leadership team to read. So very thankful for that - I heard about it. I'd never gotten a chance to actually sit down and read it, so I'm about halfway through it. I'm enjoying it.

MILES: You're welcome.

MARTIN: And I think also I do a lot of coaching, so I think coaching is a way to you know teaching and coaching isn't that much different. You have to build those relationships first. The teaching is just in a different subject. You know, I coached my sons baseball team and actually have a game at 5:15 tonight. It's his last one this fall, so I'm excited about that, but you know you take kids that you know a couple years ago were just learning how to catch a ball. Just learning how to set up to field one, and you know now they're playing games where they're you know throwing it to first, getting guys out, they're calling out and communicating where the ball goes, where the runners are, and just to see that growth. It's exciting not just in obviously baseball but also in the classroom when you see things click with students. And it's super exciting that you know that you had a piece in that. You had a role in that.

MILES: I'm fascinated by that. Dan's brought it up a couple times. You've said it now and I can't remember my buddy Joe he was a teacher, now he's coaching soccer for like Premier League clubs, and he brought up the same thing. Just like coaching is teaching you know what I mean if we start maybe looking at it from that angle, because rarely do we get a coach that does not give their all or try to keep giving kids feedback, or pushing them, and building those relationships. It's so important as a coach. I think it's fascinating you brought that up, so thank you.

MARTIN: Yeah, and I think it's one of those things where you know in sports the objective is pretty simple. Comparatively like in soccer you gotta score a goal, you gotta kick it in the net. Whereas in education you know we have more goals, and I think sometimes we just need to simplify our focus instead of making it really broad.

MILES: Yeah thank you Martin.

SHARON: So last episode we talked a lot about climate and culture, and it's something I think you really are really good at putting a focus on in your building, which is what we needed there. And I think you've done an outstanding job at that. Can you talk a little bit about how you've improved the climate and culture for students and staff in your building?

MARTIN: Sure. You know a lot of when I came in was listening to the staff and things that they're already doing, things that aren't effective, and you know we've implemented some new things. We put a twist on maybe some existing things. So we just had last week last Friday we had our first Pride Assembly, and a Pride Assembly is where we recognize students for their basically like you know character traits we wanna see. And so you know we have teachers that nominate their students and they come down. They get their name called, they get a certificate, they get to run up as as I call it the red carpet.

MILES: It was great.

MARTIN: Red rugs we put together. They're pretty long- red carpet. They love it and as they run through it all the teachers are giving you know high fives as they come up. And so the specials teachers which I they did a phenomenal job, so I'll give them a shout out. They had always done that, and so kind of a twist I put on it is everyone now we're gonna nominate one certified and one classified staff member that we think is showing those character traits. In this case it was perseverance, this time. And so it's a chance for us not just to nominate our students, but to also recognize the efforts of our staff. They know they they work hard. I see it every day. Some of the other things, so quarterly staff events. So I think a lot of staff members they see each other. They kindof have this work relationship, but they don't necessarily get to build that relationship out of the work setting. I think it's really important for staff members to interact with their peers or their colleagues you know outside of school.

SHARON: Right.

MARTIN: And so it's something we're gonna do. We already had one that was the second week of school - we went to Buffalo Wild Wings. It was kind of hey have fun, meet people, socialize. Yep.

MILES: It was a great time.

SHARON: It was a great time.

MILES: Thanks for the invite.

MARTIN: Miles and Sharon came, and they loved it. It was fun. So we're gonna have another one.

MILES: Yeah when is that? Hold on, hold on a second there. Was that only a one time invite or what's going on here?

MARTIN: You're invited to go to the one Thursday of next week. In fact, I told my staff if we get enough people there I will do the blazing challenge, so you might get to see me suffer a little.

MILES: So this is next Thursday the 13th?

MARTIN: Yeah, three to five

MILES: Three to ... got you, got you. You know what? I think I don't know about you but I think I can make that happen. I as in going, not the Blazing Challenge. I don't like hot food, so no don't worry mom. I'm not eating spicy food. Yeah.

MARTIN: So tying that back in, we actually are doing a social committee, which is a committee that they help plan, you know if we have something like a teacher having a child or birthdays or even something sad like something tragic. You know, we have a committee that will help handle those things and kind of to recognize people and and just I think it it just the sense of belonging and caring about each other that kind of ramps that up. And with that we're going to plan out future events so I like to do you like a night where we all go out bowling.

SHARON: Yeah.

MARTIN: So you know I know some people talked about even you know maybe later in the year like a Monarchs or Royals baseball game towards the end of the year. I think that would be really fun. We did stuff like that at my previous school and it was a big hit. We even did axe throwing, from which I will say I mean I do have some concerns about the hand-eye coordination of some of our staff members, but with proper coaching, right, I think they could do it.

MILES: I know some I know somebody who's pretty good at axe throwing.

SHARON: I am.

MARTIN: OK. I have a trophy in my car.

MARTIN: Nice.

SHARON: Go ahead. I'm sorry.

MILES: No, let's keep going with axe throwing. When people throw the axes, do they ... I'm just kidding, sorry.

MARTIN: So they spray wood down, so it has to be on the right side and doesn't bounce down.

MILES: Today I learned. Cool, thank you.

MARTIN: And then also we do staff shout outs and I really like this. It's a form that our staff members, it's anonymoys, and they can submit just to kind of kind of give a shout out to another staff member that they see doing a good job, and so at the end of every week I basically take all those comments, I put them into a building wide e-mail and I send them out. I

think it's nice for our staff to know that their efforts are appreciated, and that we appreciate them.

SHARON: Especially by their peers.

MARTIN: Yeah and that's that's a beauty of it is

SHARON: Right

MARTIN: And I should touched on earlier, the awards we did during the Pride Assembly - we pull those from the people that give staff shout outs, So on the back of the certificate they receive it actually has all the individual staff shout outs.

SHARON: I love that.

MARTIN: That kind of a fun thing. OK and then one thing that my staff are picking up on is I do a lot of e-mail competitions. So it's kind of like you know if you had that teacher that wanted to see if you read the whole thing and the article, the email, you know. We did one last week was predict the final score of the Lansing- Topeka West football game and the top three would get a Sonic drink from me. So we end up third place was a tie, so I guess four people got a Sonic Drink. You know I'll slip something in like I had one earlier in the year where you know the first three people that e-mail me a picture a picture of them as a baby would get something

SHARON: Yeah.

MARTIN: It's just something to liven it up and I can say it definitely makes your staff read your e-mails.

SHARON: Yeah – a competition. I love it.

MILES: I might steal a couple of those from you. Thanks for the advice. How about switching just really quick on that topic to student type stuff, things that you're doing I know Mufasa was one. it's OK guys I'm actually really happy you talked about staff so I think yeah we say all the time that students were everything that I think sometimes staff get overlooked, so thank you.

MARTIN: No, yeah. Obviously the students were the priority. We're doing the BUGS which is more like recognizing academic achievement, so while the Pride Assemblies are more character traits ,we also have one for academic success. So that's huge and then yeah so you touched on so I'll give the credit to my kids. They they thought it'd be really cool if we had a pet mascot and so thinking like OK well you're kind of limited when you're gone on the weekends like or and just other things what mascots can you actually can have. I can't have an actual lion. As much as I'd like to, it probably wouldn't work out well/

MILES: I don't think that has to do with the fact that you're gone on the weekends, so this is really – no lion.

MARTIN: So their idea was a snake.

SHARON: There's a plethora of problems.

MILES: There's a lot of things that come up with that- going down that route, but sorry go ahead.

MARTIN: So their idea was a snake. And so in the research to get one, I found a snake breeder in Lawrence that had one that matched the school colors of Lansing. So red, white, and black.

SHARON: Bravo.

MILES: Very well done.

MARTIN: I got it tank set up and kind of rolling that out and we use it as like you know there's a teacher and their class is rocking it all week, I will make a surprise, Mufasa will make a surprise visit. Kids think it's like the coolest thing.

MILES: I would be cowering in the corner. I am not a snake guy. I'd be like no no no I'm terrible I would -whatever you heard I did, well in here is not right. Get out. You can come back but keep Mufasa in the cage.

MARTIN: And so and most most of the students like I find that students like it more than adults. Maybe adults have some PTSD, but I got it to experience it. And so with that we we have this Mufasa leadership and when that the teacher has a student or even a staff member sees a student and they are exhibiting leadership skills that we want to see- that separate them from their peers, they could be nominated for it and they get their own certificate, and we call home, they get coupon for a Sonic drink, and the best part is they get to hold Mufasa or a stuffed animal version of him if they don't like snakes.

MILES: That would be my choice.

MARTIN: They get their picture taken and posted on social media.

MILES: See, I needed you as a principle because if I had you as a principal as a kid because I probably would be OK with snakes today. that or I would –

SHARON: I felt Mufasa.

MILES: You've held him?

SHARON: Yes I have.

MARTIN: Very brave, and you know what? I have some staff members

MILES: That is terror. Yeah.

MARTIN: and some students that were really scared and slowly they warmed up to him.

MILES: Who is - who is the -yeah, that's not happening. Who is the Miles over there? Who is the staff member that like if you wanted this person to run screaming down the hallway, just walk up to her with

SHARON: Or Him.

MILES: Yeah, sorry with Mufasa

MARTIN: Without a doubt, Mrs. Hallie Hughes. One of our MTSS aides. And she does a phenomenal job at what she does so she will hardly even walk into my office. I usually have to meet her out in the hallway.

MILES: Mufasa might get out while I'm here!

MARTIN: At that point I reassured her that the top of his tank has four blocks, one on each corner.

SHARON: OK.

MARTIN: So Mufasa will stay

MILES: It's still freaky, but I understand. OK OK. You know I'm gonna try to get better at it. All right, our final question- we had an episode that you listened to I hope. It was our first episode right this I believe episode, where we talked about our personal and professional beliefs and things that we really hold as our core values and and ideals if you will. What we'd like you to share with us - what are your professional and personal you know just quickly, don't go so deep into it, but what are they for your personal professional - what are your this I believe statements?

MARTIN: I I think a lot is being approachable, being friendly. I I think I told you this before you know one of the traits that my father had that I always looked up to him was he could walk into a room with strangers and within an hour you would think they were lifelong friends. And I think that kind of rubbed off on me. I've always been able to relate to people. I think a lot of that is treating people with dignity and respect regardless of who they are. It's one of the things that helped me get to this point is whether I had someone in my building you know they worked in the cafeteria - the custodian, the teacher you know counselor, assistant principal,

they're gonna get treated the same by me. OK. I don't you know regardless of what their position in the school I treat them with respect. I want to learn about them and about their families, learn about their jobs. And so I think that goes a long way. It's one of these things where- you wanna build those relationships. You want the people to care about from a personal level. I think also you don't you don't ever want to burn bridges, because education is a small world and odds are you will run into these people again and you wanna make sure that you know you had a good impression on them. If they care about you a lot so I think that's a huge one for me and that kind of made me tied back real quickly- we had our open house the first one we've done at LIS and a lot of that was just I wanted people in the building. I wanted the parents to you know see the work their kids were doing. And even just walking around - that positive vibe and families interacting and having fun and just making education more from a community aspect. So I think that's huge and maybe that ties into professionally you know - having those high expectations for our kids. I think our kids are capable of so much more than we give them credit for and our adults and so you know I think during the last three years unfortunately we use COVID as a reason to lower expectations and some of the big things from me is I want those kids to do well. I want them to show off what they can do and open house was their chance. They came in they they they were showing up stuff they're doing, some of the projects- they were wowing their parents. Some of them even had to do are you smarter than a 5th grader, so I think a lot of that for me is raising those expectations up and letting them know that you know you can do it and you see a lot of where students aren't sure they can but they think they can't do something. As long as we have to kind of you know philosophically hold their hands and get them to that point, and once they get that confidence, plant those seeds, that they can do this, and then we just kind of watch them grow.

SHARON: Yeah, that's a great way to end this.

MILES: Bravo, Martin.

SHARON: Yeah. Wow.

MILES: That's an excellent way.

SHARON: You just

MILES: Bravo. Would you, bravo Martin. Would you like to take over the podcast? At least for me. Sharon's awesome. You can take over for me. It is a great way to wrap it up.

SHARON: Yeah,

MILES: So thank you so much for being here.

SHARON: Fantastic. Yeah thank you.

MARTIN: My pleasure. I loved it. Maybe you know maybe some point in the future I'll have to make a cameo.

SHARON: Yeah.

MILES: You know what? I think that's a great idea. Great idea, or you know, I was gonna say maybe for the cheese puff challenge is that what we're calling it?

SHARON: I think he's coming back. You're definitely coming back.

MILES: I don't know - I think he's gonna have a bye week all the way to the final. I mean, three for three.

MARTIN: Cheese puff Challenge playoffs

MILES: That's what I'm thinking.

SHARON: Yeah.

MILES: That's the plan. That's like a bracket almost. I was thinking we got Becky Jones

SHARON: Jones, yeah.

MILES: So we'll see how she does.

MARTIN: No way she does better than me.

SHARON: I hope she listens.

MILES: Shots fired.

SHARON: I hope she listens to this.

MILES: Once again, Martin thank you so much for coming out today. This was wonderful. Thank you for all of our listeners. As always for more updates and stories on Lansing USD 469 you can visit us at www.usdwwsorryusd469.net.

SHARON: Good job, yeah.

MILES: Am I taking your spot?

SHARON: No, I mean... If you don't already have it download that free Lansing USD469 mobile app on apple and Android and the app allows you to be the first one to know of all the things happening here in Lansing USD469.

MILES: I ask every time - what's the most important thing?

SHARON: Snow days.

MILES: I do that just to make sure we get –

SHARON: Yes, please.

MILES: And just really quick because of my my mishap 15-20 seconds ago. I I know our e-mail address

SHARON: No, it's a website.

MILES: Wow wow everybody relax.

SHARON: I think I should take over this part.

MILES: The whole point was that Sharon was like waving

SHARON: www.usd469.net

MILES: Thank you. I know our website, but the point was that you were so worried about the app and I'm glad that we got that out there so if you like our content, wanna stay up to date on the latest episodes, please follow us wherever you are listening to us and leave review to help us and others find us to learn more about our great district.

SHARON: Yes. We are available on apple podcast, Spotify, Google podcasts, Amazon Music, YouTube, SoundCloud, and now iHeartRadio.

MILES: Yes you got us on iHeartRadio.

SHARON: Yes I did. And if you'd like to be a guest on a future podcast, please send us an e-mail at sharon.burns@usd469.net.

MILES: Yes please send it out to that e-mail address, and we would love to have you or talk about anything that may be useful.

SHARON: Yes, and topics.

MILES: Yes, thank you again everybody. I guess.

SHARON: That's it.

MILES: That's a wrap, huh.

SHARON: Thanks for listening.

MILES: What episode number is this?

SHARON: Four.

MILES: Wow, that's a wrap - #4. Goodbye, everybody.