

Synopsis

No one expected that a back-woods, rural school district in Northeastern Ohio's Appalachia region would achieve the academic success that it has. After all, these are the "922ers," the kids from Claymont. Many people call it "Dirtmont," or "Scaggyville."

"Dial 911 if you're in trouble. Dial 922 if you're looking for trouble."

The stigma continues, even now.

Of the student population, 60% of the children come from single-parent homes, 63% receive free and reduced meals, and the Special Needs population of the District exceeds 30%. High School Principal Rob Clarke says of his kids, "For a lot of our kids, this is the cleanest place they'll be, the warmest place they'll be, the only place where sometimes they'll have something to eat and their only contact with friendly people. In some cases, it's a miracle that they get out of bed each day to come here."

Richard Page, principal at Park Elementary, echoes,

"And if that kid needs a hug, he's going to get a hug."

Five years ago inspiration arrived, new Superintendent, Ryan Delaney. He replaced 27% of the staff in the District. The first statement he makes to a prospective new teacher applicant is,

"Tell me a joke."

He says if the applicant can't tell him a joke, then they won't relate to kids. He politely ends the interview in 90 seconds and says,

"Next?"

Ryan Delaney helped to alter old and tired beliefs, practices that no longer worked, patterns of teaching that were outdated, and helped to create a new culture in the Claymont City School District. Delaney spends two hours in his office daily. The remainder of his time is spent visiting the classrooms, talking with the kids and doing magic tricks, for which he is famous. "I am high energy, he says. And I am not for everyone. But I knew I could make a difference for kids."

The teachers in his district describe him as passionate, energetic, intelligent, accessible, playful, caring, positive, and one who does what's good for the kids.

What's good for the kids is a mantra of sorts. Clarke says, "Mr. Delaney sold us on the importance of relationships and it's made all the difference."

Many changes were made at Claymont as a result of low scores and the Academic Watch designation that continued for many years in this district.

"Nobody likes change, but in education, you have to be willing to come out of that box and say, let's do what we have to do to make it better."

says Scot Golec, Vice Principal of Claymont High School.

Delaney has made the difference at Claymont. His uncommon leadership inspires his Principals to be uncommon leaders and the Principals inspire their teachers and staff to be uncommon leaders. His methods have snowballed and the snowball now includes the community.

Despite the low socio-economic demographics for the area, Delaney is a "no excuses" kind of guy. He finds alternative ways to work within the system. He achieves this with a boyish grin on his face and moves beyond all that is negative in the world of education.

Delaney very nearly resembles a little boy in a big suit with an infectious positive attitude that is unstoppable.

Delaney leads by example. With the success in his district in a very short period of time, his administrators and teachers came to embrace change. Teachers began seeing that his methods **did** work, that it takes just as much effort to be positive as to be negative. They bought in. They became vested in their own classroom success and the collective success of the district. Teachers automatically explore ways to teach that are unconventional, finding that the avenues to learning are endless.

With or without State and Federal funding, the 922ers get the job done.

Teaching in out-of-the-box ways is commonplace at Claymont.

This longtime 'Academic Watch District' now excels with a Performance Index Score of 98.

"There's a new culture here,"
says Principal Rob Clarke.

Director Statement

From: Kimberly Calkins

The 922 documentary film project was one of those wonderful accidents my husband, Dave, and I stumbled into.

My husband and I were location scouting elementary schools on one crisp autumn day in early October 2011 in rural Northeastern Ohio for a screenplay we wanted to produce beginning in the summer of 2012.

Teri Edwards, Mayor of a small, impoverished area not far from where I was raised, arranged a meeting with the Claymont City School District Superintendent, Ryan Delaney, so we could look at some schools.

I chose this community because it's close to our studio in Northeastern, Ohio and because the area is, and always has been, such an impoverished area. But the district still has some terrific historic old schools that are still being used. And I wanted an old school. Teri was happy to accommodate our request, partly because she's my friend and partly because she's always looking to bring more diverse and interesting things to the community she serves.

We arrived at historic Park Elementary first and investigated Kelli Page's kindergarten classroom and decided it was perfect for our needs. What luck, we thought. We visited with Mr. Delaney about our June/July 2012 shooting schedule and collectively agreed it would be perfect since the students would be on summer vacation.

As we were leaving the building Principal Richard Page stepped into the hallway and we were introduced. Mr. Page invited us into his office. We accepted, being the polite people we are. We told him a little about our film and he began talking more about his school. I "thought" I knew quite a lot about the schools in the Claymont District. After all, I was raised and graduated high school only 20 minutes from this area. 922 (the local phone exchange), as it's always been referred, is where all the "bad" kids live. It's where many kids never graduate. In the 60's and 70's, if any of us girls had even an inkling of liking a boy from 922, our parents would lock us up in our basement until we got over it.

Mr. Page began citing some of the district's demographics to us. We knew the state of affairs in this area. We weren't surprised that over 60% of the kids come from single-parent households, 63% of the students receive free and reduced meals or that kids with disabilities number over 30%. But when Mr. Page told us that three of the schools have 100% parent participation, that the children are performing at 98% academically, and that many of the schools are Blue Ribbon Schools, Schools of Promise and Schools of Distinction, we fell out of our chairs.

What little I knew about education, I did know that one doesn't expect a 98 performance index score from the demographics Mr. Page was citing. We realized that while we walked into this school with our own story, we were leaving with another story and it wasn't ours.

When my husband and I returned home, I called upon some people I knew who had been involved in education all their lives. I wanted to know if they were as wowed as I was or if I was simply easily wowable. After two days of doing research two of my friends called me back and said, "Kim, you've stumbled into a 'golden story' here." Both woman I called upon agreed that something wonderful had happened in the Claymont City School District, and that the changes in the District had begun about 5 years prior.

It was then that I began my inquiries which resulted in gaining permission from the school board to begin filming. We entered into this project totally blind, trusting that the story of 922 would emerge.

What we discovered moved our crew to tears each and every time we filmed. The superintendent, the staff, the principals, the teachers and the students of this district taught us all about passion, about caring, about responsibility and perseverance against all odds. They shared with us their "no excuses" mantra, of sorts.

They taught us that 922 waits for nothing.

Somehow with the limited funds they receive, and despite the low socio-economic area, the Claymont District excels.

922 waits for no one!

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A BIT OF MOVIE MAGIC: '922'



The crew from This Much Productions (from left) — Bryan Hadley, Seth Reber and Kim Rutter Calkins — films Trenton Avenue Elementary Principal Dave Lautenschleger for the documentary on Claymont School District.

BY JOE WRIGHT
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UHRICHSVILLE —

Kim Rutter Calkins, a 1970 New Philadelphia High School graduate, likes to tell the story about how she stumbled into a wonderful project involving the Claymont City Schools District.

She always had wanted to make a screenplay and while she and her husband were in the area taking some time off from the hotel they operate in southern Mexico, she wanted to scout out an elementary classroom.

She called then Dennison Mayor Teri Edwards, who arranged for Calkins to meet with Superintendent Ryan Delaney to take a look at some schools. Calkins ended up at historic Park Elementary in Dennison and found that Kelli Page's kindergarten class was a perfect fit for her screenplay.

Calkins, along with her husband,

Dave, were headed out the door when Park Elementary Principal Richard Page invited them into his office.

"I just wanted to let them know a little about our school," Page said, adding he's proud of how much the district has accomplished over the years.

After spending time with Page and hearing about the accomplishments students in an impoverished area were making, plans for her screenplay changed.

"We were driving back to Dellroy (where Dave and Kim stay while away from Mexico), and I couldn't shut up," she recalled. "I knew there was a story."

What was once going to be Kim's screenplay has evolved into a documentary called "922." Filming recently wrapped, and editing is ongoing. The 922 refers to the telephone prefix for the Dennison and Uhrichsville area.

Some of the project's trailers can be viewed on the official movie website at www.922movie.com. The company is called This Much Productions and along with Kim and Dave, two men have been running cameras — Seth Reber and Bryan Hadley. Reber also is doing the editing work on the film. The two Panasonic cameras were purchased for the project because, as Kim puts it, the one they had from 1985 wasn't going to get the job done.

Delaney was interested in doing the project and once it was cleared by the district board of education it was full go.

"I think this will show how great the Twin Cities are," said Delaney, who can be described as a man with endless enthusiasm and passion for his work. "The school board was supportive and thinks it can be positive."

And the Claymont district has been turning things around over the past eight years despite many challenges. Some of the numbers of the district's demographics:

n More than 60 percent of the kids come from a single-parent household.

n There are 63 percent of students who receive free or reduced-price meals.

n Special needs students account for more than 30 percent of the student population.

There are huge challenges, but children in the Claymont district had a 98 Performance Index

Score (out of 120 points) and many of the schools are Blue Ribbon Schools, Schools of Promise and Schools of Distinction. The Number of State Indicators met in the 2010-2011 school year was 21 of 26.

And talking with administrators from the schools, there seems to be a common theme as to why students stigmatized as the "922ers" (among other names) are faring so well. Administrators and staff have bought into the belief that there are huge challenges but there should be no excuses in reaching the students.

"Our staff," Delaney said. "We have great people here. We have people who are happy and enjoy the kids."

Page, who is from the Twin Cities, called his staff dedicated and willing to come up with ways to reach the students. He said he has 99 percent parent participation in his school, and he won't hesitate to pick up the phone to make sure someone will be there for a student.

Dave Lautenschleger, principal at Trenton Avenue Elementary in Uhrichsville, said they have teachers who are excellent at thinking outside of the box.

"We know what the realities are," he said. "What are we going to do about it?"

Rob Clarke, principal at Claymont High in Uhrichsville, said the community and school faces challenges that are unique and not so unique.

The Times-Reporter

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Our Opinion: '922' the movie lets us root for the underdog



TIMES-REPORTER EDITORIAL

We have long known about the 922 telephone prefix, which connects the communities of Uhrichsville and Dennison in the Claymont City School District.

And now, after an in-depth news story published in Monday's Times-Reporter, we know about a documentary that's been filmed and is in the editing stage that reveals some incredible efforts and results coming from within the local school district.

"922" the movie is the brainchild of Kim Rutter Calkins, a 1970 New Philadelphia High School graduate, who was toy-

ing with the idea of writing a movie screenplay with a public-education theme when she discovered some exceptional things going on within the Claymont school system.

The idea started with a visit to Kelli Page's kindergarten class at Park Elementary, and then blossomed into a broader look at an entire school district.

Despite serving families in an economically disadvantaged area, the Claymont district is one that refuses to accept the circumstances such as the following to permit below-average performance in the classroom:

- More than 60 percent of the students come from

single-parent households.

- There are 63 percent of students who receive free or reduced-price meals.

- Special needs students account for more than 30 percent of the student population.

If anything, the statistics have motivated Claymont educators working in six school buildings to achieve what others may not have considered possible:

- Students in the Claymont district had a 98 Performance Index Score out of 120 points, earning an "Effective" rating on the 2010-11 School Year Report Card.

- The number of state indicators met in the 2010-11 School Year Report Card was 21 out of 26.

- Adequate Yearly Progress goals were met.

- Value-added measurements for improvements in reading were met for grades 4-8, and in grades 4, 6 and 8 for math.

- Additionally, Claymont High School and Park Elementary earned the State Superintendent's 2010-11 School of

Promise recognition.

The documentary "will show how great the Twin Cities are," said Superintendent Ryan Delaney, whose enthusiasm and passion for his work are captured in the previews.

"We can give a human connection and let the kids know we are here to support them," said high school principal Rob Clarke, adding: "The future is in their hands, but we will do what we can to provide support and preparing them for whatever they pursue."

The documentary trailers show many of the administrators and teachers in action, "authentic and unscripted," as Clarke describes it.

Funded by Calkins' This Much Productions, she plans to enter the finished project at film festivals, with hopes that it will be picked up by a film distributor.

Filmmakers love to tell stories about underdogs that go on to achieve great things. "922" the movie has one such powerful story to tell.

Production Notes

We All Cried

This production crew is a team of misfits. We were all misfits during our school years.

Seth Reber, our Production Manager, Post-Production Editor, Camera Two and Special Effects guy, is a self-taught, super-human genius intellectually, artistically and in other ways we can only imagine until we ask him to perform yet another task. In high school, he figured out he could graduate with a D if he only showed up to take the tests and attend 1st and 2nd periods at Dover High School. He simply could not abide school. No one cared, especially his teachers.

He's 41 years old now and a crucial key in the making of our documentary feature film, 922, the story of the Claymont City School District.

During one of our interviews with Claymont High School's Principal Rob Clarke, I (Kim) turned away from the interview because I had tears in my eyes. Rob Clarke's comments about his school and the passion he feels for his job and especially his kids, moved me beyond measure. As I turned away, back toward Seth's camera behind me, my eyes locked with Seth's. His eyes and nose were all red and there were tears coming out the corners of his eyes.

We stopped filming for a moment until we could all "gather" ourselves because we were all crying. Seth shared, "God, I never knew teachers like this existed before now."

Liz Thomas - Music Teacher

When we began filming the 922 project, we stumbled upon story after story of incredible passion. We found that most of the teachers at Claymont are so out-of-the-box, that's it's commonplace. These teachers cannot rest until they've reached every kid. If kids struggle, the teachers find new and inventive ways to help them learn. They don't leave anyone behind. When there are no funds for something they want to try or use in the classroom, they write grants. And they get them. When they don't, they reach out in other out-of-the-box ways.

You can only imagine our astonishment when we received this email from music teacher, Liz Thomas. In her own words, we share with you what she expresses.

*Dear Seth,
I was featured on a t.v. show and in several magazines about 5 years ago. I lost my hearing in my sleep 7 yrs. ago.*

I was determined to keep teaching and have. Since the original struggle to keep teaching, I have had two cochlear implant surgeries and am now a bilateral cochlear implant user. I consult sometimes with the company that produces my implant in Los Angeles as there aren't too many deaf music teachers to gather information from. =)

If you met me you may not even realize that I was hearing impaired unless my hair was pulled up and you actually saw the devices.

I teach music grades 7-12 (vocal) though my background is actually instrumental. I have 120 students involved at the high school level and another 30 in my eighth grade musical theater class.

*I guess you could say that my whole story is out of the box.
Liz Thomas*

Liz's story is one that screams passion, perseverance and patience. And we are proud to share her words with you.

Rounding Rap

Kim was interviewing Superintendent, Ryan Delaney. She asked Mr. Delaney if there were teachers in the district who were implementing very original, creative ways to teach and to help kids learn. His reply was, "Sure, all of them." Kim's comment was, "Well, let's go." Then Ryan added, "But if they're asked to share, they'll tell you that they don't really do anything that's special." "What?" Kim replied. So, in the next day or two, we hit the ground running, with cameras. The first school we visited was Eastport Elementary. We talked with Principal, Beth Johnson, who could have talked all day long and then some about her school. We soon realized we would have to schedule another half day with her as she had so much to say.

We moved on down the hall and found ourselves outside Juli Shaw's 4th grade classroom. When Mr. Delaney opened the door and stepped one big foot inside, the kids all started cheering. They all know and love their Superintendent, Mr. Delaney. Their reaction surprised us because none of us on the film crew had any idea who our Superintendent was when we were in school. But that isn't the case in the 922 exchange.

When the kids settled down, Mr. Delaney asked Mrs. Shaw what she was doing in her class that was original, creative and out-of-the-box. Mrs. Shaw stammered, hesitated and finally said, "You've really put me on the spot here. I can't think of anything I do that would be considered all that special." Mr. Delaney was right and he really did know his teachers.

I whispered to Mr. Delaney to ask the kids if there was anything special that Mrs. Shaw was doing in their class to help them learn. "Without a moment's hesitation they all screamed out, "THE RAP SONG!"

With little encouragement from Mr. Delaney, they were all up on their feet, had taken their positions in front of the class and on a count of 3 from Mrs. Shaw, they started singing and rapping the ROUNDING RAP SONG. It wasn't enough that they had the lyrics and the tune down pat, it was also choreographed. And they performed as well, if not better, than any rapper I've ever seen.

We found out later from Mrs. Shaw, when her memory returned, that her kids were having trouble remembering the rules for rounding fractions. So, she simply made up a rap song with music, lyrics and the choreography, to boot. And she taught the kids fraction rules in a new way.

I challenge anyone who thinks that you cannot put the Fun back in Fundamentals.

Rebels With a Cause

We were at Eastport Elementary one day filming and found ourselves without classes to film. It was the noon hour and all the kids were in the auditorium-turned-cafeteria for the lunch hour. We decided to film the lunch hour, remembering that school cafeterias are synonymous with chaos and we wanted to capture a bit of chaos on film, just for fun.

When we entered, to our surprise, a couple hundred kids were seated, quietly eating lunch while others were in line to get their lunches. Kids were talking, but they were talking in conversational tones. I couldn't believe we were in an auditorium doubled as a cafeteria and not one elementary student was doing anything but eating. I realized that a lot of time and effort had been exercised to create this calm atmosphere and organized meal process.

Seth is a rebel at heart, even if he has managed to calm those rebellious tendencies. When he entered the cafeteria, I guess it was just a little too quiet for him. And that tiny demon on his shoulder pointed out the pull up bar. In an instant, Seth's 6 ft. 4 inch frame barely hopped a foot, and this spindly spider man was suspended from the pull up bar, doing fake one handed pull ups.

It took a nano-second for the entire room of two hundred kids to burst out laughing, abandoning their applesauce and egg noodles and we saw chaos. We hadn't even set up the cameras yet.

Without a doubt, the documentary film crew would be asked to leave. I was sure of it. Worse, we would be sent to the principal's office and given detention. Suspension seemed like a strong possibility and being expelled was definitely a reality. After all, this school district has a zero tolerance policy for misbehaving and ill-mannered kids. There would be consequences.

But wait, we were all adults, so we collectively pointed our fingers upward, and yelled, "Seth did it. Seth did it." The teachers in charge seemed to be okay with this. Seth received some scolding looks and was instantly propelled back into 2nd grade, head hung low, and slithering down from his perch. Ah. Reprieve.

Just to put this story into perspective, we are not a student film group. Our producer and my husband is 67 years old, Kim is 60, Bryan is 43 and the baby, Seth, is 40. For more antics, check out our Facebook page. This Much Productions.

Biographies

Kimberly Calkins: Director



Kim's mother, Liz, decided that Kim should be an actor, so Kim was raised in The Little Theatre of Tuscarawas County, a small regional theatre in northeastern Ohio. From the age of 3, Kim performed on and off throughout the years in too many plays to list here.

Kim is a graduate of Texas State University and holds a BFA degree with an emphasis in acting and directing. She was featured in several stage productions whilst at Texas State.

Following college graduation, Kim worked in radio as a sales associate and in commercial production. She had a penchant for production work and called upon her alma matre's theatre department to provide "talent" to create some of the best commercial ads the station had ever produced. Kim was a hit with the station and with the undergrads at Texas State. The kids who helped Kim at the radio station all graduated with resumes full of professional credits to their name. Win/win.

Kim procured a talent agent and worked professionally in Texas in various industrial films, television commercials, made-for-TV movies, and stage plays. Additionally she performed with the musical trio, Destination, for several years from 1999 to 2002.

Kim and her husband, David, own and operate a small hotel/resort in Xcalak, Mexico. They live full-time in Northeastern Ohio writing, directing and producing special online projects.

They are currently touring their documentary feature film project called 922, filmed exclusively in northeastern Ohio.

David Calkins: Executive Producer



After receiving an FCC 3rd Class license in 1967, David was actively and continuously employed in the radio industry, which involved announcing, field production, engineering, time sales, in-house production, live sports and any and all associated duties in the radio/broadcast industry.

During this period, David continued to work in live theater and film.

He eventually formed his own business, Third Coast Video, which was a general video production company located in the Central Texas Hill Country. He then established a restaurant/live music venue that included producing live footage of various musical groups including Willie Nelson and Wayne Toupes, among others.

David was involved in the production of several major "outdoor" musical and special events, namely The Annual Crawfish Fest and Jazz Fest in Wimberley, and Texas and Austin Days in Austin, Texas.

He has worked in the film industry as an actor (speaking role) in the film Resurrection, assistant director, still photographer, and animal wrangler.

Ryan Delaney: Claymont District Schools Superintendent



Ryan is a native of Wooster, Ohio. He holds an undergraduate degree in elementary education from Akron University, which he attended on a football scholarship. He received a master's degree in administration, as well as a Superintendent's Certificate, from Ashland University.

He was a teacher at Montgomery, a Principal at Lincoln and Taft, all in Ashland, Ohio, then he moved to become the Principal of Ben Franklin Elementary School in Newark, Ohio. He is an adjunct professor at Ashland University and he is the focus of the book, "Mission Accomplished" by Anna T. Erickson, which promotes concepts for quality leadership. Ryan developed and presents a workshop – "Can One Person Make a Difference?" – that champions proven methods for educational success.

He consciously sought out one of the poorest, least - performing school districts in Ohio and welcomed the challenge of becoming its superintendent. "The greatest moment of my career was the day I found out I was selected to become Superintendent of the Claymont School District," he says.

In addition to being an experienced educator, Ryan is a self-taught magician. He frequently uses magic to connect with students.

Ryan and his wife Debbie have two grown children.