

Nelson

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TMB Coach Jason Kainz said Nelson being recruited as an offensive lineman at the Division I level is nothing short of awesome. To his knowledge, no other male athlete from the school has ever been offered a full ride at a Division I university.

"As far as I know, Tony is the first," Kainz said. "And not only is the U of M an elite group, but I would consider any Division I program to be elite company. Tessa Nelson played Division I volleyball. That's the last (TAHS student-athlete) that I know played at that level. Mary Jo Miller played (basketball) at Kansas State. I'm guessing there could be a few other females as well, but as far as male athletes, I only know one of the Bassett boys walked on at Division I Nebraska."

While Nelson is a standout football player, he also excels at basketball and track and field. Currently, Nelson leads the Panthers with 21.1 points and 11.2 rebounds per game. During the spring, Nelson runs the 100-meter dash and throws the discus and shot put for the Panthers.

to coach and willing to bust his butt to better his team."

Kainz said Nelson has been heavily recruited and received full-ride scholarship offers from at least three different Division I universities.

"I know he's been in contact with and/or visited with South Dakota State, University of North Dakota, North Dakota State University and Iowa State," Kainz said. "As his head coach, I've taken calls from Central Michigan, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Missouri and Tulane University. It's been a fun experience for me as a coach to visit with these college coaches about one our players!"

As an offensive lineman, Nelson doesn't have a lot of flashy statistics to throw out there, but Coach Kainz has a way of measuring Nelson's abilities.

"I know he has the most pancake blocks of any offensive lineman I've ever coached or played with in all my years, which is 33, but who is counting," Kainz said. "As far as defensive end statistics, in two years of seeing the field, Nelson has 26.5 total tackles, 22 solo tackles,

Community Center. The second date is May 1.

"I think what we're doing will be good," Lehnhoff said. "A lot of people are donating crafts and baked goods. I keep doing something on the side, too, just to help."

The medical issues for Davis actually began in June 2014, when she was diagnosed with diffuse large b-cell lymphoma.

"I did receive chemo with great results," Davis said. "After the chemo treatment, I started getting short of breath. At the time, I didn't think anything of it, but at my follow-up appointments, the x-ray showed there was now something going on with my lungs. After seeing a lung specialist, I was then diagnosed with interstitial lung disease."

Davis, who lives in Lucan, goes to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester every three months as they continue to monitor the deterioration of her lungs.

"Currently there is no cure, and my only hope is a lung transplant," she said. "In December, when my case was presented before the Mayo Transplant Team, they said I was a candidate, but my lungs would have to deteriorate to 40% or less before they would put me on the list."

Tuesday, March 16 could mark the next chapter for Davis.

"Next week, I go for another follow-up," Davis said. "They will do a pulmonary function test, CT, chest x-ray, 6-minute walk test and blood work to see what percent of my lungs are yet functioning. I feel a little torn about this because I want my health, but without my lungs deteriorating, it won't get better for me."

Davis said every day is a struggle to breathe.

"The cough is so bad," she said. "I feel like I am drowning in my own phlegm. The doctors stated I should not be around others either as a common cold could be catastrophic for me. I looked forward to retirement so I could be with my grandchildren and do things with the family, and I am not going to give up on that dream."

Those who know Davis can only imagine how financially devastating the situation is — and will be — so they are determined to help in any way they can.

"Because of having to leave the workforce, she didn't have health insurance," Lehnhoff said. "Her husband's health insurance picked her up, but there's not too much support for the medication, so there are those bills. Then she and Larry have been in Rochester for over a month, accumulative time, at a hotel while she got medical care. And after the double lung transplant, she will have to live in Rochester in a hotel or something for three months, and someone has to be with her. Larry can't quit work or be gone all the time, or he'll lose his job. It's a tough situation."

Davis is especially grateful for the overwhelming support.

"People have been awesome and very

Rallying

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supportive, which also helps me to continue on this daily battle," she said. "People have volunteered to give up their time and be away from their families to come and stay with me during the three-month mandatory stay in Rochester after the transplant. It is such a blessing to have a community of friends like that."

Prior to the upcoming fundraiser, Lehnhoff has made, sold and donated several craft items as well as Valentine's Day cookies.

"I sold 27 dozen cookies and I have about 27 dozen ordered now for Easter," she said. "Many people who picked them up were very generous and gave extra money. And some wanted to just send checks. I was glad to be able to send a sizeable check



Ruth Lehnhoff brushes white paint on a wooden cross in preparation for selling a number of them at an upcoming fundraiser for her friend and former coworker Elizabeth Davis, who needs a double lung transplant. Photo by Jenny Kirk

to her even before the fundraisers because it has to be daunting to have significant ongoing medical bills."

Lehnhoff knows the importance of supporting those in need. She's never forgotten the outpouring of support after she and her husband, Dave, lost their 35-year-old son, Kyle, to brain cancer on Dec. 19, 2012.

"This community opened up for my son and daughter-in-law (Jill)," Lehnhoff said. "It meant the world to us. This is our way of giving back. That's what community and family is about. If you can do it, you do it."

For the March 27 fundraiser, there will be crafts and baked goods available for sale. Attendees can also purchase chances to win one of two quilts.

"Lois Ahlschlager has donated one," Lehnhoff said. "Pam Greenfield is kind of working on the quilt part of things. I believe one of the quilts is queen size and the other is more of a throw size. We're also doing two large Easter baskets. One for a girl and one for a boy. People are donating to put items in the baskets."

The fundraiser on May 1 will include coffee, rolls, walking tacos, Kettle Corn and is basically a "no clothes rummage

sale." Greenfield and Iversen are slated to sell the Kettle Corn at the event, which runs from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the community center.

"We are doing a clothes-less rummage sale and then we're also going to have plants, whether people have hostas they dug up or have smaller plants to offer, on May 1," Lehnhoff said. "We're serving coffee and rolls in the morning and then walking tacos starting at 11 a.m. The quilt will also be on display and we'll draw for that."

Lehnhoff added that Thrivent Financial is donating \$250 toward expenses.

"I'm working with Marla Anderson on that," she said. "We can't have any big things like a dinner as people just aren't that comfortable yet. That's why we're doing the walking tacos. It's in a bag and you can take it and go."

According to Lehnhoff, former nursing home social worker Becky Drietz is coming to help at the event, as is Lori Buysse. She added that Elizabeth's good friends, Dr. Louisa Paul and Janet Marty, have also been very supportive.

"Becky is bringing crafts," Lehnhoff said. "Janet and Dr. Paul have both offered to come to Rochester to stay with Liz. People are great. We're lucky to live in a small community."

The need for organ donation continues. According to data from the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, about 36,100 lung transplants have been completed in the U.S. since 1988. Currently, about 2,000 lung transplants take place throughout the country each year.

"I've been told lung transplants are even more difficult than a heart transplant," Lehnhoff said. "A lot of people donate blood, but there's a lot of other stuff that can be donated as well. Organ donors can save someone's life."

Lehnhoff said it is difficult to see her friend and former coworker struggling. She recalls how awful the stomach cancer was for Davis seven years ago. And now, she's basically isolated from people.

"She's not someone who takes from people," Lehnhoff said. "She's a giver. But so much has been taken from her. She's had to give away all the outdoor plants, and she's a fantastic gardener and flower person. She even had to give away her rose bushes. She's basically secluded, and she's on oxygen all the time. It's even hard for her to talk because it makes her cough. The thought of her having to be worse is really scary."

While the road ahead is a rough one, supporters of the family-oriented, strong-faith Davis believe she can get through anything.

"She's a great person, and she's got the will to survive," Lehnhoff said.

To share an uplifting message with Davis, you can reach out through her email at: elizabethdavislpn@gmail.com.



Tracy-Milroy-Balaton football standout Tony Nelson (54) looks like a man among boys because of his size, strength and ability. Nelson is headed to the U of M on a full-ride scholarship. File photo by Jenny Kirk

In his recent Tweet announcing his verbal commitment, Nelson first thanked God for giving him "this great opportunity" and for making him the person he is today. He also thanked his parents, family, high school coaches and teammates.

While Gopher Coach P.J. Fleck is getting a coach of an athlete in Nelson, Kainz is quick to point out that the young man is an even better person.

"He comes from a great family, has an outstanding GPA, is never absent from school and never tardy to class," Kainz said. "He's easy

29 assists, 5 tackles for a loss and 3 pass break ups."

Kainz added that Nelson is not the kind of kid who looks for time in the spotlight. Rather, he's the type of athlete who does whatever he can to help put his teammates in that position.

"Tony isn't all about himself, and it would be easy for him to be that way," Kainz said. "I can tell you that he's competitively compassionate for his team and his teammates. I'm excited for Tony and wish him luck in this journey, but I'm happy that he'll be a Panther for one more season!"

PANTHER B-SQUAD PICKS UP WIN



TMB guard Hailey Gernentz drives the lane during a B-squad game recently against CMCS. The Panthers won 29-22. Photo by Jenny Kirk

NOTICE

All sump pumps must be removed from the sanitary sewer and directed outside effective March 15th of each year.

THERE WILL BE A \$200 FINE FOR ALL VIOLATIONS.

Any questions, please contact Balaton City Hall at (507) 734-4711

The Wilder Outdoor Theater has received a Minnesota State Arts Board CSO: Creative Support For Organization Grant in the amount of \$14,985. This grant cycle was created specifically to assist arts organizations significantly impacted by the Covid pandemic. The grant is awarded to organization with a solid history and strong promise for the future. The dollars will be used to

help pay current operating expenses as well as develop new scripts, adding Covid protection on site, increase our social media presence and add closed captioning to some of the programming to make it easier for audience to follow the dialogue.

The Wilder Outdoor Theater is preparing for a live 2021 season with the outdoor drama "Fragments of A Dream" about the childhood

years of Laura Ingalls and her family in Walnut Grove. Ticket sales started March 1st. Dates are July 9-10, 16-17 and 23-24. The following weekend is the Loose Gravel Music Festival on Saturday, July 31.

To comply with health and safety regulations, social distanced seating, mask-wearing and enhanced cleaning will be in place. For a more detailed explanation of policies,

they are listed on the walnut-grove.org website.

Check out the WALNUT-GROVE.ORG website and click on the links to both the Facebook and YouTube channels to keep up with the latest information about this summer's activities or call 888-859-3102 for tickets and information. So you can "COME HOME TO LAURA INGALLS."

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Balaton Fire Department's Drive Thru Pork Loin Feed
Sun., Mar. 21, 2021
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Balaton Fire Hall

Serving with sweet corn, scalloped potatoes and dessert

Free Will Donation accepted
Funds will go toward the purchase of SCBA breathing masks