



Holifalooza

Role model teacher honored

Academy for Academic Excellence students plan festival to benefit teacher with ALS

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By BROOKE EDWARDS - Staff Writer

APPLE VALLEY — Students from the Academy for Academic Excellence have banded together to raise money for a beloved teacher who has been diagnosed with ALS, commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

"Holifalooza" will be a music and arts festival to benefit Steve Holifield, who has taught math at AAE since 2003.

Holifield has been having health issues and getting testing done for some time. He told his students that he had ALS — an incurable disease attacking the brain and spinal cord — at the end of the last school year, and the school was devastated.

"I had been thinking about this idea since I heard about Mr. Holifield having ALS," said senior Katy Herrick, public relations representative for the Outreach Community Service Club, which is putting on Holifalooza. "I brought it up when Outreach started, and it really just grew from there."

The club has done several community service projects since it started last fall, gathering 4,000 cans for a food drive, participating in the Cancer Relay for Life and more.

Herrick, along with the club's secretary, Megan Mahany and President Katie Curry, have all had Holifield as a teacher for a couple of years. They said he treats them like adults and makes learning fun.

"Steve has just been such an example of character, integrity and courage to our students," said Connie Johnson, who is helping Outreach put the event together as its sponsor teacher. "I've had a couple of his students say they wanted to be a math teacher. He's that kind of role model."

Holifield still taught fulltime for most of this school year.

"He probably should have stopped (teaching) a while ago," said his wife, Christine Holifield, "but he really wanted to finish out the school year."

He finally had to leave AAE within the last month when he took a turn for the worse, and has been in the hospital ever since.

Christine Holifield said her husband is very excited about the event.

"He's hoping to come home and attend, for a little bit anyway," she said.

The whole Holifield family will be at Holifalooza, including Steve and Christine Holifield's two children, both of whom attend AAE.

Seven local bands are scheduled to play at Holifalooza including Paperback Hero, Joneslagger and The Shifted.

There will also be an art gallery, with student paintings and sculptures on display, and activities throughout the day including football and basketball tournaments, a water balloon toss and a three-legged race.

The club also hopes to have food and drinks, and are still looking for stores and restaurants willing to donate supplies.

Half of the funds raised at the event will be sent to the national ALS Association for research and the other half will go to Holifield's family to help cover medical bills.

"He's not going to be working anymore," his wife said. "So any support is greatly appreciated."

Holifalooza will take place from 2 to 8:30 p.m. on Saturday at the Academy for Academic Excellence at 17500 Mana Road in Apple Valley. Tickets will be \$5 and will be sold the day of the event.

For more information or to get involved, visit [www .MySpace.com/Holifalooza](http://www.MySpace.com/Holifalooza).



Renah Agha / Staff Photographer

Outreach Community Service Club members at Academy for Academic Excellence work on organizing 'Holifalooza,' a benefit concert held to raise funds for math teacher Steve Holifield, who has been diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease.



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Amanda Sunthonlap, 15, left, and Michael Adams, 16, students at Academy for Academic Excellence, work on posters for a concert to benefit math teacher Steve Holifield.

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