

Phoenix Rises from the Ashes

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[Story Submitted by: dphock](#)



In early October, my daughter's elementary school had an electrical fire, and about half of the school buildings were destroyed. (Thankfully, the fire occurred on a Sunday and no one was hurt.) As a result, the kids were out of school for two weeks while school staff regrouped to provide a safe school site. During that time, my 11 year old daughter and I talked a lot about the fire and about how people come through scary and difficult experiences like that. Caroline was born in China and her Chinese name includes the word for "Phoenix," so she is well-acquainted with the symbolism of a phoenix rising from ashes. (Every kid who has read or seen Harry Potter knows about that, too!) We decided to use Caroline's time out of school to make a piece of art for her beloved principal, Rhonda Bellmer. Caroline drew the phoenix image, and I enlarged it on my computer. Then, Caroline traced it onto a piece of silk using a liquid resist. She painted the silk, too. Once it was all dry, I sandwiched and machine quilted it, adding subtle flames with red and yellow thread. We presented the Phoenix quilt to Ms. Bellmer on the first day back at school. Ms. Bellmer was speechless and teary-eyed, and invited Caroline to show the quilt to the school staff at the staff meeting that was just about to take place. So, Caroline then showed the quilt to all of the teachers and staff and talked about why she'd made it and what it meant to her. There wasn't a dry eye in the place! This Phoenix quilt now has a place of honor in the principal's new (temporary) office. It was a wonderful experience making this together. It allowed us to talk a lot about a difficult situation, and it was satisfying for both me and Caroline to create art that presented a positive image for the experience.