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Mr Leonard directing the highschool band at a former Football game.

Music man brings talent to WFHS

By Martha Bourbon

WFHS students and staff welcome new teacher Aaron Leonard as their band and choir teacher. He grew up in Kansas City, Kansas, and attended Piper High School.

He went to Emporia State University to become a band and choir teacher. The last several years he has played a lot of jazz, and since he is a first year teacher he has spent most of his last few years on college work.

The good teachers in his high school and college are the people who inspired him to become a teacher.

“They motivated me and helped me excel as a performer and they taught me to become a better educator,” he said. Leonard planned on teaching music because it always interested him and he is good at it.

Choir and guitar student Mary Beth Duda gave Leonard high marks.

“He does a good job at understanding the students’ needs,

he listens to their concerns, and he tries to make everything really understandable and interesting,” she said.

Leonard teaches high school and middle school band and choir. He also teaches high school guitar. He’s been playing instruments since he was in the fifth grade and singing since college.

The musician said his mother is the only other person in his family that plays an instrument and sings. She teaches kindergarten through eighth-grade music classes and she sings and plays the piano.

He has played the trumpet in Toronto, Canada, at an International Association of Jazz Educators and he’s played at a North Texas Jazz Festival.

“Seeing the students grow musically” is his favorite part about being a teacher he said. Leonard says his plans with the band and choir is to work on day-to-day skills and working on skills to make the band and choir “even more awesome”.

Middle school principal adds high school to his duties

By Breanna Parsons

For high school Principal Rick Smith it’s been a big change from being principal at the middle school to the high school. He was hired in April to take over the high school in addition to his middle school duties.

He began working for the district as principal of Appanoose middle school for seven years and enjoyed it very much. He said that he has enjoyed the challenge.

Smith has many goals for West Franklin High. His first goal is to improve the climate for students and staff. He says he wants to keep making WFHS a better place for students and staff day by day.

His next goal is improving learning opportunities for students. He also wants to make significant improvement in students test scores. In sports, he wants to get the schools athletic programs to the point where we’re consistently playing for state titles.

Smith, who likes to be outdoors and listen to music, said the biggest change he would like to see is the amount of pride in our students at school. He said the part he likes best about being principal is working with young people and trying to make a positive difference for them.

The thing he likes least: having to discipline students.

The thing he likes the most is that being a high school principal is a challenge.

It’s new to him, and it’s a learning experience, he said.

The Voice asked Smith’s reaction to a number of issues students have been talking about:



Principal Rick Smith

Q: Why do tank tops have to be an inch wide? Why can’t we wear spaghetti straps? Clothing is an expression of freedom, it tells people a little bit about us.

A: Because some clothing distracts learning and it distracts guys when girls wear skimpy clothing.

Q: Why can’t we bring our own drinks and food into the school anymore? More than half the time the pop machines are not even filled.

A: Because we can not control what comes in to the school. How is he to know that there is alcohol or what not in it? If it is closed before you come in, then you can have it.

Q: Why can’t girls bring girls or guys bring guys to dances? Isn’t that sexist against students?

A: We can bring the same sex (f/m) to dances this year.

Q: Do you think we could have a talent show where students and staff could show off their talents?

A: I think it’s a good idea

Q: Why did you become a principal?

A: Because I wanted to make a positive difference to kids, and because education is a way up in the world.

Finally The Voice told him that many people have said the atmosphere at this school is much better than the past few years, and we asked him to what he attributed this change. He said that people working together would be the biggest part; he wants it to be a place that’s safe, and which kids enjoy.

“It can’t always be fun,” he said, “but should be part of the time.”

New teacher likes logic behind math

By Grace Stewart

Thomas Hornung, originally from Colorado, is a new math teacher here at WFHS. He teaches Algebra A, Algebra B, and Geometry. He received his finance degree in 2005 at Oklahoma State and and math and education degree at Fort Hays State just last May.

When asked why he chose math as a profession he said, “I like the logic behind it and it was always easier for me to understand rather than something like English. You can use math to describe the world around you. It can be

used for just about anything.”

He was inspired to teach by his college professors and said he was basically already teaching while he was in school, his classmates always went to him when they needed help with their math homework.

During his free time Hornung enjoys reading, going to museums and art galleries, seeing plays, working with computers and has even built some of his own. Hornung says, “I really enjoy it out here and I like my students. I’m excited to see them graduate and see what they do afterwards.”



Teacher Thomas Hornung