

Eight new teachers begin 2010-11 school year

Written by Chris Lee and Jes-c Brandt



□□ Those new to the Holyoke School District are pictured from left,

front row, Luke Thomas, Elizabeth Bloss, Christina Martinez and Stuart

Potter; and back row, Daniel Burge, Julie Beaven, Crystal Rigel and

Jennifer Koops. □□ —Enterprise photo

Eight new teachers were introduced to students within Holyoke School District this week as classes resumed. Three join the staff in the JR/SR high while four will begin at the elementary school. A new band teacher will split his time between the two schools, as well.

Jennifer Koops

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The first of two newly hired JR/SR high social studies teachers, Jennifer Koops is looking forward to the kids first and foremost. She is also looking forward to going to sporting events and band concerts.

Koops graduated in May from University of Northern Colorado in Greeley with a degree in history/secondary education.

She always knew she wanted to be a teacher but didn't know if it would be at the high school level or the college level. It wasn't until student teaching in Greeley did she know she wanted to stick with high school.

"Those kids were amazing, and that sealed the deal for me," Koops said.

Koops grew up in Ulysses, Kan. where she graduated from high school in 2006.

Golf is a sport Koops really enjoys. She also likes reading, watching movies and listening to music. She noted a lot of her friends still live in Colorado and it will be nice to be somewhat close to them.

Koops said she enjoys the small town atmosphere and was looking forward to finding a job in a small town. "I knew that was what I wanted to do so I looked off the front range," she added.

Koops was involved with the honors program at UNC and sat on the honors council. She also was on the student council for the humanities and social sciences college.

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Daniel Burge

Daniel Burge was hired to be the new family and consumer science teacher at HHS.

Burge has spent most of his life in Denver and most recently was working in the wireless department at Qwest.

The economic times hit many companies hard, and Qwest was one that was forced to let some people go. Burge happened to be one of them.

The move to teaching is a career change for him. Before working for Qwest, he spent time as a UPS driver while finishing his bachelor's at Colorado Christian University in 1998 and also worked for a family construction business.

After some motivation from friends, he decided he wanted to try his hand at teaching.

He completed his TIR (Teacher in Residence) through CCU last year and felt he learned a lot and enjoyed it just as much.

His license is in instructional technology. After finishing his TIR, he knew he was ready for the next step and a full-time position is truly the next step, he added.

After looking at the job description, he said to himself, "This just feels right. This is something that is tailor-made for who I am."

Burge said the interview acted as a confirmation to the way he was feeling about the job. He is

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looking forward to a successful year. "I think I've got a great start," he said.

Burge will live in Holyoke while his wife, Julie, stays in Denver where she works with real estate and foreclosed properties. The couple has two grown children, both of whom are married. They also have two grandchildren.

In his free time, Burge enjoys playing racquetball. He picked the sport up during college and is hoping to find a place in the area to play.

Stuart Potter

Stuart Potter has taken over teaching duties for the band program within the school district.

Potter grew up in Portland, Ore. and graduated from high school in 2002. He obtained his bachelor's degree in bassoon performance from University of Arizona in 2006. He also has two master's degrees from University of Illinois. He received his master's of music and master's in music education in 2008 and 2010 respectively.

He was looking for a teaching job and stumbled across the open position in Holyoke.

"This seems like a great place to teach the things I want to teach," Potter said.

Potter was a key player in getting a band program started within an independent school in Champaign, Ill. as part of his second master's degree. He has also been heavily involved with professional orchestras, touring ensembles and summer festivals.

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“Everything,” Potter answered when asked what he is looking forward to the most.

He added teaching is only part of the job. He gets to see the product when students perform for the public. He also said band can be home for a lot of students.

Potter’s dad has family in the Denver and Boulder areas so it will be nice to be close to them while he is so far from his parents.

In his free time, Potter enjoys running, reading, pickup games of different sports and is currently learning his way around yard work.

Potter is looking forward to meeting a lot of people. He encourages anyone with questions or concerns about the band program to contact him at the school.

Luke Thomas

Luke Thomas is the second JR/SR high social studies teacher hired by Holyoke School District.

Thomas grew up in Woodland Park and graduated from high school in 1999.

After a year of college at Colorado State University, Thomas decided to try his hand in the dry cleaning business. He began working at the front counter and quickly climbed up to a district manager of a chain of stores in the Ft. Collins area.

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Realizing he didn't want to be in the dry cleaning business for the rest of his life, he decided to go back to school. He attended Regis University and obtained his Bachelor of Arts and Social Science in 2009.

Thomas has held different substitute teaching positions since graduating. One was with Holmes Middle School in Colorado Springs where he taught eighth grade American history.

He has also held two long-term substitute positions at Palmer High School and Jenkins Middle School.

"It was nice," Thomas said. "It gave me more full-time classroom responsibilities."

Thomas and his wife Bethany have a 5-year-old daughter Bria. They moved to Holyoke nearly three weeks ago and "absolutely love Holyoke."

Thomas enjoys being outdoors and always keeping busy—anything from hiking to camping, biking and spending time with family. Thomas is also trained in Brazilian jiu-jitsu. The family has three dogs which keep them very busy, as well.

Christina Martinez

After a year without art classes in Holyoke Elementary School, new teacher Christina Martinez is excited to get in the classroom.

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Graduating from Minot State University in North Dakota in 2009, Martinez substitute taught at Douglas School District, where she had previously attended school.

Following her year at Douglas School District, she made the move to Holyoke, with her two dogs.

As the art teacher for all classes grades kindergarten through six, Martinez will have the opportunity to work with a large number of kids. She hopes, in addition, to work with parents and members of the community. "Everyone is allowed and can contribute in my classroom," she said. "There's a way everyone can be involved."

This year Martinez plans to focus projects on recycled materials. She firmly believes that anything can be an art material, and students can make something out of practically nothing.

In addition to promoting a green classroom, these projects will be a way for Martinez to expose the children to different kinds of artwork beyond the traditional styles. She noted her class will be very hands-on.

Martinez has many ideas for the upcoming year and is really excited to get going. "I just really love what I do, and hopefully I'll convey that to the students."

Crystal Rigel

Newly hired as one of the sixth grade teachers, Crystal Rigel is eager to get the school year underway.

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A graduate of Colorado Christian University, Rigel taught fifth grade in Brush for five years. Her transition to Holyoke School District has many exciting opportunities, she noted. The technical aspect of the classroom will offer a new style of teaching for her.

After attending the ISTE conference in Denver this summer, Rigel is especially excited for the school's new technology. In her classroom, as well as many others, teachers will be using Promethian interactive whiteboards.

Classroom response systems, or "clickers," will also be used in several classrooms. Rigel noted she looks forward to using them for quizzes to get instant feedback on what needs to be reviewed. She describes the new technology as a way to bring tools for the real world into the classroom. She believes her students are a generation based on technology and it's important to incorporate that aspect in their school.

Rigel noted she thinks the students will be very engaged with the new tools. While she has previous experience using an online learning site and a smart board, she anticipates that both she and the kids will be stretched and challenged in new ways.

Rigel, her husband Gary, and their children Christopher and Sandy live in Sterling. When she's not teaching in the classroom, Rigel and her family like to teach elsewhere. Every summer they travel with their church to Grandmother's Bay, Saskatchewan, where they teach a Bible school.

Julie Beaven

Returning to the classroom this year is first grade teacher Julie Beaven. Originally from Iowa, Beaven graduated from Northwestern College in Orange City in 1997.

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She taught kindergarten and first grade for eight years at St. Vrain Valley School District in Longmont. Being in the classroom, she said, was her passion and she really enjoyed her time teaching.

After Beaven and her husband Herb had their two children, Noah and Hannah, she transitioned to staying home full-time. Last year, the family moved to Julesburg, where Herb is a teacher.

While Beaven enjoyed her time at home, the whole Beaven family is anticipating the upcoming school year. Noah and Hannah have been in her classroom, she noted, helping her prepare the room for the school year. Her family has been very supportive and very encouraging, she added.

“I consider myself a lifelong learner,” Beaven said. She loves to learn and hopes to impart the value of learning to her students at Holyoke Elementary School.

Things have certainly changed since Beaven was last in the classroom, especially in technology. On the other hand, she commented, education is about meeting the needs of students. She is excited to be in a district that demonstrates a consistent desire to do what’s right for kids.

Beaven looks forward to meeting her students, as well as getting to know the community and her colleagues. When not in school, she enjoys spending time with her family, reading and being outside.

Elizabeth Bloss

Taking on the role of sensory motor teacher in the special education department, Elizabeth

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Bloss looks forward to the upcoming school year.

Bloss graduated from University of Northern Colorado in December 2009 with a Bachelor of Arts in special education. She lived in Vail, working as a teacher's aide, in the time between living in Greeley and moving to Holyoke. "I've always wanted to live in the country," Bloss commented.

When she came to Holyoke for her interview, Bloss said she fell in love with the place and really likes the town's atmosphere.

As a first-year teacher, Bloss is excited to get in the classroom. She looks forward to learning as much as possible from fellow teachers and classroom experience.

When she's not teaching, Bloss enjoys running and spending time with her dog. She also hopes to get more involved in horseback riding now that she lives in a rural setting.