

Lynette Harms hanging it up after 20 years

Written by Chris Lee

After 20 years of combined time spent in education, Holyoke Elementary special education teacher Lynette Harms is leaving the classroom.

She is leaving the halls and the numerous kids for a much smaller number. She plans to spend some time with her two grandchildren who live in the area.

Her husband Ken plans to “put me to work fishing and farming,” Harms said with a smile on her face.

“I just knew it was time to quit,” Harms said about her decision to put the pen down. “I love kids,” she said, but other aspects of the job are getting to be much more time intensive.

She will miss the kids most by far. Being able to watch the growth over the years is an aspect of the job she has enjoyed.

Of course the staff will be missed. She noted Holyoke has great staff and administration which adds to the greatness of the district.

She will trade school work for farm work as she will be a little more involved with the family’s operation.

The new retiree grew up in an educational home. Her mother and father, Rhoda and Alfred Renzelman, live in Haxtun. Her father was a principal so she was learning from the best from the get-go.

She remembers voting as a family on whether or not her father should take the principal’s job because a couple of them were in high school at the time.

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Her path into education was always assumed. “It was kind of a natural way to go back in those days,” Harms said.



Special education teacher Lynette Harms is set to wrap up a teaching career that has spanned over 20 years and many areas of study. She said she will miss the kids the most. —Enterprise photo

Harms began her schooling at Concordia Teachers College in Seward, Neb. after graduating from Haxtun.

Following her graduation from University of Northern Colorado in Greeley with a degree in elementary education, Harms went to teach in Venango, Neb. For two years she drove from Paoli, where she lived with husband Ken, to Venango where she taught first and second grades.

Following two years, she was offered a first-grade position in Holyoke and gladly accepted it. She held that position until 1978 when her first daughter was born. She stayed home where she kept busy raising four children. Harms stayed in education during that time by teaching some GED classes as well as substituting.

She also held a title I half-time position in Fleming and filled in as a long-term substitute in

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Haxtun for some maternity leaves.

She entered back into full-time teaching in 1998 as a first-grade teacher in Holyoke where she worked with Barb Brown and Karen Scott.

“I felt very fortunate when Holyoke hired me back,” Harms said.

She spent the next seven years keeping track of the youngsters before she got tired. “First grade takes a lot of energy,” Harms laughed.

In 2005, she was given the opportunity to teach special education where she has spent the last seven years. She was able to go back and get her generalist special education license. She has a true compassion for special education which was another reason for transitioning into the new role.

Harms noted special education takes a lot of energy but it’s a different type of structure. She said she was ready to try something new at the time and it worked out well.

“It has been fun,” Harms said. She is very thankful for having been given the opportunity to work with a lot of great people throughout the years.

“Holyoke has been blessed with having aides in the classrooms,” she added. “They are such an important part to this system. And that’s one of the reasons I applied in Holyoke to begin with.”

To keep her and the students going over the years, Harms has followed a couple of her favorite mottos. “Whatever task ahead of you is never as great as the power within you,” and “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart.”

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Harms remembers back to when she began teaching in Holyoke. She had 28 students in her classroom. She laughed saying she still has about that same number but her aides have been amazing.

Looking back on favorite memories, Harms can think of a time in first grade when she had a student who really wanted to go to the office to call his mom. She said she kept putting him off, and putting him off, until finally she asked him why? "To tell her I can read," he shouted with excitement.

Another memory is when they thought they had lost a student. All was OK when they found him hiding up in a closet.

Technology has evolved over the years as well, Harms said with an iPad lying on the table in front of her. She was quick to credit elementary principal Kyle Stumpf who has worked hard the last few years to get the school up to date with today's technology.

So as the chapter closes on education, Harms will never forget her career as a teacher. She moves on from the classroom to a place where she knows she will be happy—more time spent with family.

Harms and husband Ken have four children. Jessica and husband Brian Gales live in Phillips County and have two children, Tessa and Luke. Melissa Harms lives and teaches in Milliken. Stephanie Harms lives in Loveland where she is in the health and wellness field and son Gus farms in the Phillips County area.

Along with her parents, her mother-in-law Betty Harms also lives in Haxtun.

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