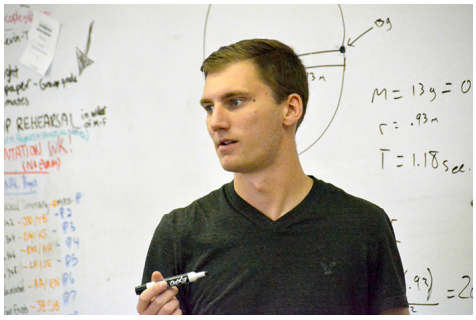
Written by By Deswood Tome Sun Correspondent
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It's a return to a familiar place for Braden Homan, who spent his eighth grade year at Rehoboth Christian School in a summer soccer program.

Now, nearly 10 years later, Homan is Camille Sidewalk Cafe's "Teacher of the Month" at the same high school where he played soccer in his youth.

Rehoboth Christian School was originally founded as Rehoboth Mission School in 1903, and serves students from pre-K to grade 12.

For Homan, teaching runs in the family. Originally from Denver, Colo., his father was on faculty at Denver Christian High School in Lakewood.

Homan teaches chemistry to his junior year students, along with physics and pre-calculus.

"Chemistry for me is the most fun," Homan said about the advanced science course. "Everyone groans about. It has this negative connotation —'It's hard, I'm not going to understand it,'" he explained. "They hate it the whole time through."

Homan teaches 45 students in the junior class in a classroom that is divided in half to accommodate a laboratory.

"My passion for is chemistry," he said. "I get excited about sodium bonding with chloride."

Teaching chemistry, while rewarding, can prove a challenge. It is not a subject that is easily explained. Demonstrations through models, laboratory experiments, and hands on application are how students learn best.

"Seeing a demo is better than a teacher telling us something crazy-whacky that happened. The hope is that I get the student to love that subject," Homan said.

He desires for every student to understand science by taking a mathematical approach to the subject.

"We just started talking about bonding," he said. "It can be hard. You can't see what you're actually learning."

Working with molecule model kits in teaching science at the atomic level has been useful with students.

Homan's goal is to prepare students for college by working with each of them as they grasp chemistry and science.

Space in the high school laboratory is limited. Yet, the high school anticipates a new facility on campus by the next school year.

FROM SOCCER TO SCIENCE

Soccer is what piqued Homan's interest in a teaching position at Rehoboth. He participated in soccer camps for three consecutive years during the summer, and Denver Christian High School, where his father taught, sends students to Rehoboth during the summer.

"He had a desire to coach soccer," Chris Van Slooten, who serves as high school principal, said of Homan. "We needed a coach."

Homan played center midfielder in soccer at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, where he majored in chemistry.

"I'm the headman soccer coach," Homan said for the Lynx varsity team at Rehoboth.

Rehoboth plays competitive soccer against teams in Kirtland, Santa Fe, Sandia Park, Socorro, and Moriarty.

"You've lived down here a couple of times," Van Slooten said about his conversation with Homan. "You want to have a heart for kids — to reach them spiritually and academically."

Rehoboth Christian School lost a teacher to another school two years ago. The high school has had to double up its math and science teachers to fill the gap.

"We know how hard it was to find a math and science teacher," Van Slooten said. "We had a dual back up plan if we were not able to find a math and science teacher. We would split the role."

Homan's arrival to the high school this fall has alleviated the stress of math and science teachers doubling their roles.

But the demands of a difficult subject and a limited resource of teachers are still felt.

Student enrollment for the high school grades at Rehoboth Christian School this fall is 170 students.

Homan is the only chemistry teacher at the high school.

Students, do you have a great teacher? If so, stop by Camille's Sidewalk Café, 306 S. 2nd St., and fill out a nomination form, stating why your teacher is the best. The winner for each month receives a gift and gets featured in the Gallup Sun.

By Deswood Tome

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