

Social studies teacher gives up T.V. dreams to pursue a new passion: teaching

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Managing Editor
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Each month, Camille's Sidewalk Café recognizes one local teacher within the Gallup area for his or her determination to help students go above and beyond. Prospective teachers are nominated by students who feel they deserve to be recognized.

This month's award went to Jeff Hunt, the social studies teacher at Middle College High School.

When he started college at Western State College in his home state of Colorado, Hunt knew he wanted to study history. In an interview with the *Sun*, he said he wanted to be “one of those hoity-toity muckety-muck experts” on the *story Channel* Hi

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But when he realized how competitive the field was and how much more schooling he would have to do, he turned to teaching.

His first three years of teaching were spent at JFK Middle School in the Gallup-McKinley County Schools district, but now he has been teaching at the Middle College High School for five years.

Despite having dreams of being on T.V. or working at a museum, Hunt said he's really “grown

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into” teaching.

“A lot of teachers I know are blessed with having it be a calling, and they’re just called to the classroom. It’s the location that has clearly been destined for them,” Hunt said. “That hasn’t necessarily been it for me, I’ve grown into it. It’s the only job I’ve ever had where I’ve never woken up and not wanted to go to my job.”

Hunt said he has a list of favorite things when it comes to his job, but on the top of that list is the moment when the kids begin to understand a concept, when he can see the “a-ha moment” come across their faces.

“Those [moments] are just warm and tingly down in the tummy,” Hunt said.

As a middle school teacher, Hunt said he really enjoys interacting with his students, but he said one hard part about the job is knowing that he doesn’t have a hand in what they might experience outside of the classroom.

‘I can control as best I can what their experience is like inside this space, but when they go home or in to the community, when they go deal with any difficulties or struggles they have that I don’t have any impact on, it’s tough to watch them do that and not be able to help,” he said.

Middle College High School English teacher Jeffery Collier Kempton works side-by-side with Hunt, both literally and physically. The mens’ classrooms are right next to each other, and every spring semester they participate in something called “Englishhistory,” which is a curriculum that combines the two subjects.

Hunt and Collier Kempton work together to infuse history content with English skills.

Collier Kempton called Hunt “a great teacher” who is fun to work beside.

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“Mr. Hunt cares very deeply about being prepared and presenting everything he can to the students,” Collier Kempton said. “When he puts together even a single lecture he’ll often read multiple books about that topic just so he can get at the lived experiences of that event or that time period so that he can give it life for the kids.”

Collier Kempton explained that Hunt doesn’t just relay information to his students.

“It’s not just that he’s giving them information. Instead, he’s inviting them to care,” Collier Kempton said.

“When he received the Teacher of the Month award, Hunt said he was very surprised. He also gave a shoutout to other Gallup-area teachers.

“There’s lots of really excellent really deserving teachers in town,” Hunt said.

So while the *History Channel* dream may be in his rearview mirror at this point, Hunt knows he’s exactly where he’s meant to be.

“Telling stories to eighth graders [is] a ton of fun, so to heck with hoity-toity *History Channel* stuff,” Hunt said.

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Managing Editor