

New faces among Brady school staff this fall

Written by Deb Egenberger
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Four new teachers will greet Brady Public School students when classes resume on Thursday for the 2012-13 school year.

Three first-year teachers enter the district and one experienced professional. All hoping to bring fresh ideas to the classroom.

Rebecca Aldrich

As a child, Rebecca Aldrich used to spend time during the summers with her grandmother, who is an artist.

“She always let me create my own stuff,” Aldrich says.

Now the first-year teacher from David City will be guiding K-12 students as they produce their own art projects.

“I hope to bring a lot of variety into the program as far as media and types of projects,” the December 2011 Concordia University graduate said.

Aldrich loves to paint and work with ceramics. She looks forward to teaching students how to create pottery projects using the potter’s wheels and kiln at the school.

She is also excited for the opportunity to work with students of all ages.

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“Most schools just offer art in junior high and high school,” she says. “I’m going to work with elementary students too. That will be a fun variety.”

Teaching art wasn’t always in Aldrich’s plan. She originally wanted to be a doctor.

“In the second half of my senior year of high school, I decided I wanted to be a teacher instead,” she says.

Aldrich has a bachelor of fine arts degree in art education. She will also serve as the assistant girls basketball coach.

In her spare time, Aldrich enjoys doing freelance art as well as writing, playing the piano and reading about new techniques.

She is single and now lives in Gothenburg.

Tony Munter

Relating real-life experiences to students in a classroom can be challenging for some teachers.

First-year 7-12 science instructor Tony Munter has several years of hands-on background in fish and wildlife biology to help.

Munter has worked full or part time for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission for 14 years, the past 2 years at the North Platte fishery.

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“I believe I will bring a lot of real-world experience that can help students relate,” Munter says. “Pretty much every day, I’ve used life science, physical science and chemistry in my job.”

Munter graduated from Wausa High School in 1997 and earned his bachelor’s degree from the University of Nebraska at Kearney in fish and wildlife biology in 2002.

Putting his practical knowledge to work as a teacher means Munter will be in a transitional program at UNK this fall to earn his teaching certificate.

“It’s something I’ve always wanted to do,” Munter says of teaching. “I’m ready for a new challenge.”

Munter and his wife, Emily, recently moved from North Platte to Jeffrey Lake with their two children, Avery, 2, and Jase, 1.

Besides spending time with his family, Munter likes to hunt, fish, boat and do just about anything that involves the outdoors.

In addition to teaching science, he will serve as the assistant football coach.

Heather Wolf

A library can be daunting to a child who doesn’t fully understand how books on the shelves are organized.

To foster a love of reading in every student, Heather Wolf wants to make the Brady school

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library kid-friendly and easy to use.

“I just finished being a student and I’ve learned there is a lot to understand about how the library operates behind the scenes,” says Wolf, a 2007 Cozad High School graduate. “I want to make the library a good experience for every student who comes in.”

Spending the past three months working at the summer school in Lexington, Wolf had the opportunity to learn the same software used in Brady’s computerized library catalog.

“I think that will make the transition much easier,” she says.

In addition to being the media center director, Wolf will also teach a journalism class and direct publication of the yearbook.

“That’s a lot of variety,” she says. “I don’t know exactly what to be ready for so I know I have to be flexible. I think I can roll with it.”

Wolf, a four-year letter winner in Cozad’s track program, will serve as assistant coach for the Eagle track team.

Outside of school, she likes all kinds of outdoor activities along with horseback riding, photography and traveling. She is single and will commute from Cozad.

Tiffany Widdifield

Tiffany Widdifield has taught computer and business classes in small schools since graduating from Midland University in 2003 with a bachelor’s degree in business administration and education.

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She went on to earn a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from Wayne State College in 2008.

Widdifield will continue using the knowledge she gained while teaching at Elgin, Cedar Rapids and Cozad schools as Brady's new computer instructor.

But she'll also wear a new professional hat as the district's technology coordinator.

"I've been impressed with this small school that has put so much technology at the fingertips of students," Widdifield said. "It's amazing that they can keep up in such an ever-changing field."

That host of technology—from iPads to interactive white boards—will keep Widdifield on her toes but she looks forward to the challenge.

"Most teachers enjoy learning something new," she says. "The joy of this job will be that I never stop learning."

Brady implemented a one-to-one laptop program for high school students in 2010.

While the maintenance of such a program might seem a little overwhelming, Widdifield had experience from the teacher side of a similar iPad program in Cozad.

"I don't anticipate the transition will be too difficult," she says.

What she looks forward to most is sharing the technology experience with every teacher and every student in Brady.

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“It’s kind of a unique situation where I will come in contact with everyone,” she says. “And so far, everyone on staff has been so welcoming that it’s like I’ve been there for years.”

Widdifield and her husband, Jim, who is principal at Dudley Elementary, live in Gothenburg with twin daughters Abigail and Madison, 7, and son Jackson, 2.

“Outside of school, I enjoy being a mom,” she says. “And on the rare occasion that I have spare time, you might catch me reading a book.”