

Staff celebrate holidays with their families

By Katelynn Toft

Seven teachers in the high school wing, including two married couples, have young children under the age of five. With Christmas only days away, the holidays for those staff members will be filled with wonder, spending time with family, passing on traditions and making memories.

FSC teacher Mrs. Hailey Houk and art teacher Mr. David Houk love setting up for Christmas with their sons Leland, 5, and Lloyd, 3. Every year on the day after Thanksgiving, the Houk family gets their Christmas tree from Handley’s Holiday Hillside in Solon.

“They have a great selection of trees and also a train that Leland and Lloyd can ride on by themselves,” said Mrs. Houk. A tradition Mrs. Houk is passing down from her childhood is giving an ornament every year to each of the sons that they can put on the tree. The Houks write the years and their sons’ names on the ornaments, so they will have the ornaments as a special memory.

Looking over their past Christmases, one that really sticks out is the one when Mr. and Mrs. Houk announced the news of their son Lloyd to their families. “We left a clue in a box that my mom had to open while Leland was pretending to go to the bathroom,” said Mrs. Houk. “When he walked out, he had a big brother t-shirt on for everyone to see our news.”

The Houk family spends a lot of time together during the holiday season, giving gifts and playing games.

“The joy that you see in their eyes makes it all worth it,” said Mrs. Houk. “We know that times like this won’t last forever, so we try to cherish them as much as possible.”



The Houk family includes Mrs. Hailey Houk, sons Lloyd and Leland, and Mr. David Houk.

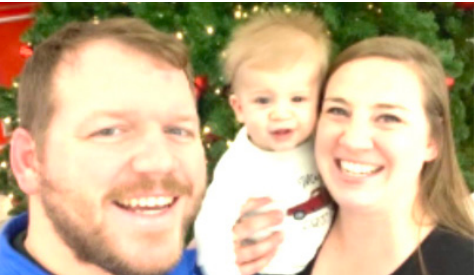
Social Studies teacher Mr. Daniel Knipfel, his wife, Molly, and son, Grady, celebrate the holidays in a joyful fashion. Grady is just under two years old and doesn’t fully understand the busy Christmas season yet, said Mr. Knipfel, but little by little, he is starting to take it all in.

“We did take him to see Santa,” said Mr. Knipfel. “It was very entertaining to see whether he would accept Santa or scream stranger danger.”

One of the Knipfel family’s favorite memories is when they were teaching Grady how to tear open the presents on his very first Christmas.

“This year, after witnessing a few birthdays, and being a year older, I am hoping he will understand gift opening a little more,” said Mr. Knipfel. “I am anxious to see if he will turn into a paper shredder or just play with the ribbons.”

While they wait for the day to come, the Knipfels set up their Christmas tree and get together with their family to bake cookies.



The Knipfel family includes Mr. Daniel Knipfel, son Grady, and wife Molly.

On Christmas Eve, Spanish teacher Señor Jeff Trask and his wife, Emily, leave out cookies and milk for Santa. As their twin boys, Luke and Noah, both three and a half years old, await Christmas morning, the family sits and reads “The Night Before Christmas.”

One of Mr. Trask’s favorite memories of the holidays is going to Vander Veer Park in Davenport in 2021 on Christmas Eve.

“My kids really enjoyed seeing the lights on the trees, and it felt really magical,” said Mr. Trask.

Christmas morning is chaotic as his kids open their gifts first thing.

“There is wrapping paper everywhere, and batteries are the most important item in the house that day,” said Mr. Trask.



The Trask family includes Mr. Jeff Trask, sons Luke and Noah, and wife Emily.

PE teacher Mr. Cody Wille, his wife, Katey, and their kids, Shae, three years old, and Cam, one year old, are still new to the family Christmas game.

“Cam was only one month old last year for his first Christmas, so it was just fun introducing him to family and friends that hadn’t met him yet,” said Mr. Wille. “Shae started to get a feel for the joys of Christmas last year.”

On Christmas Eve, the Willes set out a plate of cookies and carrots for Santa and the reindeer. They also open up presents with their extended family.

On Christmas Day, it’s just the four of them. When it comes to opening presents, they help Cam out with gripping the paper, so he can open his own gifts before his sister beats him to it.

“[Shae] unwrapped presents as fast as she could and would want to move on right away to another one,” said Mr. Wille. “She was also quick to help Cam open his presents.”

No matter how they open gifts, the Wille family loves spending time together for the holiday season.



The Wille family includes Mr. Cody Wille, daughter Shae, son Cam, and wife Katey.

Math teacher Mrs. Abigail Straube and her husband, social studies teacher Mr. Matt Straube, will have the fullest house this holiday with their four kids, Gracie, seven years old, Griffin, five years old, Gwen, three years old, and Gus, nine months old.

Between seeing all of the Christmas lights around town and traveling to see family far away, the Straube family fills their Christmas experience to the brim. Every year, the Straube kids shop for other kids through the Angel Tree program and attend midnight mass to celebrate Jesus.

“I think it is a great reminder of why we celebrate Christmas,” said Mrs. Straube. A new tradition that has been added is spending time with the kids’ great-grandmother, who is 95 years old, and making gingerbread cookies.

During the holidays, the Straubes travel up to three hours north to see Mr. Straube’s family or a little over an hour south to see Mrs. Straube’s family.

“We’ve opened gifts on the 23rd, 24th and 25th depending on the year,” said Mrs. Straube. “Doing it on a different day can be nice since it spreads out when the kids open their gifts.”

When the kids get their opportunity to open gifts, absolute chaos erupts, according to Mr. Straube. Wrapping paper and packages are everywhere.

Mrs. Straube enjoys the feeling of seeing the kids open their gifts, but she feels that it is also important to teach the kids that presents aren’t what Christmas is all about.

“We try to model for our kids that it is more important to give than to receive,” said Mrs. Straube.



The Straube family includes Griffin, Gus, Gracie, and Gwen.

Rise & Grind’s girls’ basketball player of the month

624 5th Street
Durant, IA

Senior Avery Paper is competing in her final season. Paper has been playing basketball since she was in second grade. She got into the sport when she started playing on a travel team that featured her current teammates as well as Wildcat Head Coach Ross Delong. What she enjoys most about the sport is the memories made.

Paper

Apex Ink and Apparel’s junior high athlete of the month

708 5th St., Durant, IA 52747
563-785-6223

Gianna Alpen is playing for the seventh grade basketball team. Alpen has been playing basketball for eight years, and she got into basketball because of watching her sisters and dad playing together. What she enjoys most about the sport is playing with friends.

Alpen

Arty’s Ice Cream and Grill’s boys’ basketball player of the month

609 W. 5th St.
Wilton, IA 52778
563-732-2222

Senior Mason Badtram is a key returning varsity player for the boys’ basketball team. He got into the sport because of a Bettendorf team that was coached by the parents of one of his friends. What he enjoys most about the sport is competing. Badtram’s goal this season is to be the best leader he can be.

Badtram

Gym From page 1

Mr. Burnett said that the school district may run into trouble with asbestos during the gym demolition. There is none exposed to open air, but Mr. Burnett explained that some may remain in the walls and other places. A few years back, the school district replaced flooring in the building and found asbestos in the glue.

“We had to bring an asbestos company in to make sure all that was removed,”

he said. Of course, with projects like the new gym construction, there are often “unforeseen conditions” that must be faced, said Mr. Tursi. However, his company has been working on the construction of schools for over 30 years, so it knows how to adapt to these conditions and “make sure that issues that may come up are addressed with the district’s best interest in mind.”

Raynor Door’s girl wrestler of the month

2370 West Lake Blvd.
Davenport, IA 52804
563.391.9566 – phone
www.raynorqc.com

Junior Maliya Berry is part of the girls’ wrestling team for the second year in a row. What got her into the sport is the self discipline that the sport requires. She enjoys wrestling because of how hard wrestlers have to work to reach their goals. Berry’s goal this season is to qualify for the state tournament.

Berry

Peel’s Inc. boy wrestler of the month

755 W. Iowa 80 Road
Walcott, IA 52773
(563) 468-5460

Sophomore Douglas Ramer is wrestling for the Wildcats for the second year in a row. Ramer has been wrestling for ten years, and he got into the sport because of his cousins. “I enjoy that it’s not a team sport, and winning and losing is on you, not a team.”

Ramer