

A Man of Many Hats

By Jayden Bates-Bland and Zachary Lovingier

(Photos courtesy of Tamsen Stokes)

Almost everyone at Golden High School knows of our infamous principal Brian Conroy, and if you don't, where have you been? Most frequently you will see him being loud and bubbly at assemblies and other school events such as sports games. Conroy is such an important and happy face at Golden, but not a lot of people actually know the man himself - the fun, enjoyable, reliable man who has been running this school for so long.

Mr. Conroy joined the military at the age of 17 and he served for 28 years. Eleven of those years were spent in the Army and 17 of them were spent in the Navy. He spent several of those years in active reserve while he was assistant principal at Golden. Obviously, because he joined at such a young age, the military had a large impact on who is and his outlook on life. When talking about this impact he said

“I mean, it's all about perspective, right? And when you change your perspective,

you can change your entire attitude about something. And I think what Uncle Sugar taught me the most was that, where you are right now is momentary, and if you keep moving you'll get in a better place.”



After Mr. Conroy left the military, he began his teaching career. He began at Evergreen High School and taught history there for a decade before he moved to Golden High School. While he has been at Golden, he has climbed the ranks starting as a teacher and making it all the way to principal and he has had this position for 12 years. When asked about his favorite thing being principal, he responded saying

“So my favorite parts, I think, are just recognizing student achievements and then really helping teachers become better teachers and finding joy. Because sometimes, sometimes you don't find your joy in teaching and you need to find joy somewhere else. And sometimes it's around, ‘Hey, you're a really good teacher. You're a really good leader. Think about doing this also.’ So that's what I like about my job.”

But obviously, being a principal is not easy. There are so many things that Mr. Conroy must deal with every day and it's not always easy. Mr. Conroy said that the hardest thing to deal with is tragedy and he discussed the ways that he believes we can prevent these tragedies.

"There has to be something done about mental health in schools. Absolutely, 100%. I would sacrifice programs to get mental health faculty in this building, to provide mental health support for our students and our faculty. And the fact that we as a district don't spend more money on mental health is shocking to me and disappointing."

A question that so many people have had surrounding Conroy's retirement though, is why? Why is someone who has been in this community and loved this community for so long choosing to leave?

"Because I'm old. Because I'm old. This is 30 years in public ed and I've got students whose kids are now coming to high school. Right. I mean, all of a sudden, it was like a gut check for me. They called me up and said, 'Hey old man, my daughter's coming to your school' and I'm like, 'But I only had you in class just a little while ago' but I think right now it's 30 years in public Ed. My wife wanted me to retire last year and I needed a year of some normal. But I think that the other thing is, I'm also tired, and I'm tired of coming to work every single day and every single day, having to worry about school violence, school shooters. It keeps me awake at night. It is the single greatest thing that plagues me every day, and at some point we have to figure something out because kids can't live like that. Administrators and teachers can't live like that, and our society can't continue

to operate. And if I knew what the answer was, I'd quit teaching or education. I'd write a book, I'd make a billion dollars and I'd, you know, sail off into the Neverlands, right? But at some point we have to figure something else out because what we have isn't working, and we only talk about it in binary terms. So that's one of the reasons why I'm retiring is I just simply can't continue to do that. So I want to get a job where I don't have the keys to the place and I'm not responsible for everybody's safety and I don't want to have to make every decision."

Mr. Conroy has always been a part of the Golden community, both the school and the city, and that will likely never change. He shared that his favorite event that happens at



Golden has to be the homecoming parade because of how many people get involved, and that isn't just people at the school. That's everyone. The whole community. And that's a community that he is still going to be a part of. While it is true that we won't be seeing Mr. Conroy in the halls of the school all the time, and he may not be the guy with the biggest smile at every assembly, he's not going to be completely gone. We will still be able to see him in the streets of Golden and I'm sure you could stop and say hi and he would ask how you've been and you'd have a lovely conversation.



When we asked him what he was most excited for in retirement he responded "Change. Change. I think I'm most excited about sleeping past five am. It is my goal. You feel me, sister? Yes. Excellent. It's just, I mean, I have woken up before 5:00 or 5:00, o'clock for since I was 17 when I joined the Army. And so I'm, I am desperately ready to try to sleep until seven. I mean, if I can sleep till seven, that's a victory in my court."

Change is definitely hard, but if Mr. Conroy can be so excited for it, maybe we can take a page out of his book and get excited to see the new chapter of Golden and find out what fun adventures await us in the upcoming year.