

Continuing the History

Added by K.E. Fisher on September 10, 2019.



Photo credit: Kei Brown

The Social Studies wing has recently gained Mr. Johnson, a 2012 Talawanda grad himself, and Ms. Weaver, returning after student-teaching for Mrs. Aerni last year. We hope their answers to our questions help the high school get to know them well.

Talawanda Tribune (TT): How is teaching at Talawanda so far?

Weaver (W): Oh my gosh, I love it. There is no place that I would rather be. I have some students I had when I was student teaching, and most of them are new. When I was interviewing, it was the most natural interview. I knew everybody that was interviewing me and I'm just so happy.

Johnson (J): I have really enjoyed it thus far, the kids and staff have all been great. I went to Talawanda and graduated in 2012. Growing up it was my dream job to teach social studies and coach football at Talawanda. Currently, I teach Social Studies here and coach football (this is my 3rd year), wrestling (3rd year), and lacrosse (4th year) so to me it feels like I am

fulfilling a lifelong dream/goal. I have no complaints and am super thankful to have this opportunity.

TT: What classes are you teaching this year?

W: I have government, so it's mostly seniors, and diversity studies – so fun – and then also Academic Seminar. That's new this year, it's like a structured study hall.

J: American History and Anthropology.

TT: How did you originally become interested in History and Social Studies?

W: I always, always loved it because my teachers were so amazing and they made it so interesting, but I didn't know I wanted to be a teacher until I went to Belgium when I was an exchange student. My English teacher actually asked me to do a presentation on the United States, and I went home and I was getting stuff ready and my host mom said, "Jess, you're so excited. I've never seen someone so excited and happy to be talking about their government, you nerd." And then presenting in front of my class over there was just the coolest thing because the kids were just so interested to hear from someone their age.

J: I took World History with Mr. Bomholt my freshman year and fell in love with the subject when we learned about the Russian Revolution, WWII, and the Cold War. I even was a history major in college because of it.

TT: What is your favorite historical era/period? Why?

W: It's changed over time. In high school I would have said the Revolution and early America, but now I think probably the Holocaust. Looking back at my education – and I've had a great education and great teachers – I think it's the area that needs the most improvement, because most kids, and adults too, would just be able to tell you that it was Jewish people that were mass-murdered, and I think the biggest lesson we can take away from the Holocaust is like how people were able to like, turn a blind eye to something so bad. Trying to teach people how to have empathy is one of my biggest goals as a teacher.

J: 20th century, in particular WWII and the Cold War. I have had a member of my family serve in every branch of the military except the air force. Growing up it was always interesting to hear their stories about what they went through. Additionally, it is just such an enthralling era where a lot of stuff happened.

TT: Outside of history, are there other subjects or interests that intrigue you?

W: My favorite class that I took in college was a political science class and it was about modern world governments. I think comparing certain topics to other governments in the world, you just learn so much. Like you learn more about your own country and values when you compare it to other countries. So definitely like world governments I love, and learning about other cultures and languages. I love travelling, I love maps, geography, I love all that.

J: Creative Writing, I almost minored in it in college. Drama, I was part of the drama program in high school and was in a play in college. Sports, I coach 3 sports, and have a Graduate Certificate (it's like a graduate school minor) in Sport Management from Miami University; additionally, I played NCAA Division 3 college football at Centre College in Danville, Kentucky; we went undefeated in the regular season my Junior year. I also love to travel, I have been to 10 different countries and am planning to visit 2 more this year.

TT: How would you say history education has changed since you were in school?

W: I think it's so much better. I think when I was in middle and high school, even though I loved my teachers, they have told me even that they were such bad teachers back then because they did PowerPoints and lectured. There's definitely a place for that, but when that's all you do, the students never really get to discover the information on their own. So I think now there's a huge movement in the U.S. to "make learning come alive," as corny as that is, so that kids aren't just being told, they're getting to experience it and do something with it. That way, it's meaningful and hopefully they'll leave remembering something.

J: I graduated in 2012 so to me it seems like it has not changed much. The [Ohio Graduation Test] was just replaced with AIR Tests.

TT: Have you had any particularly memorable moments or experiences from teaching at Talawanda this year?

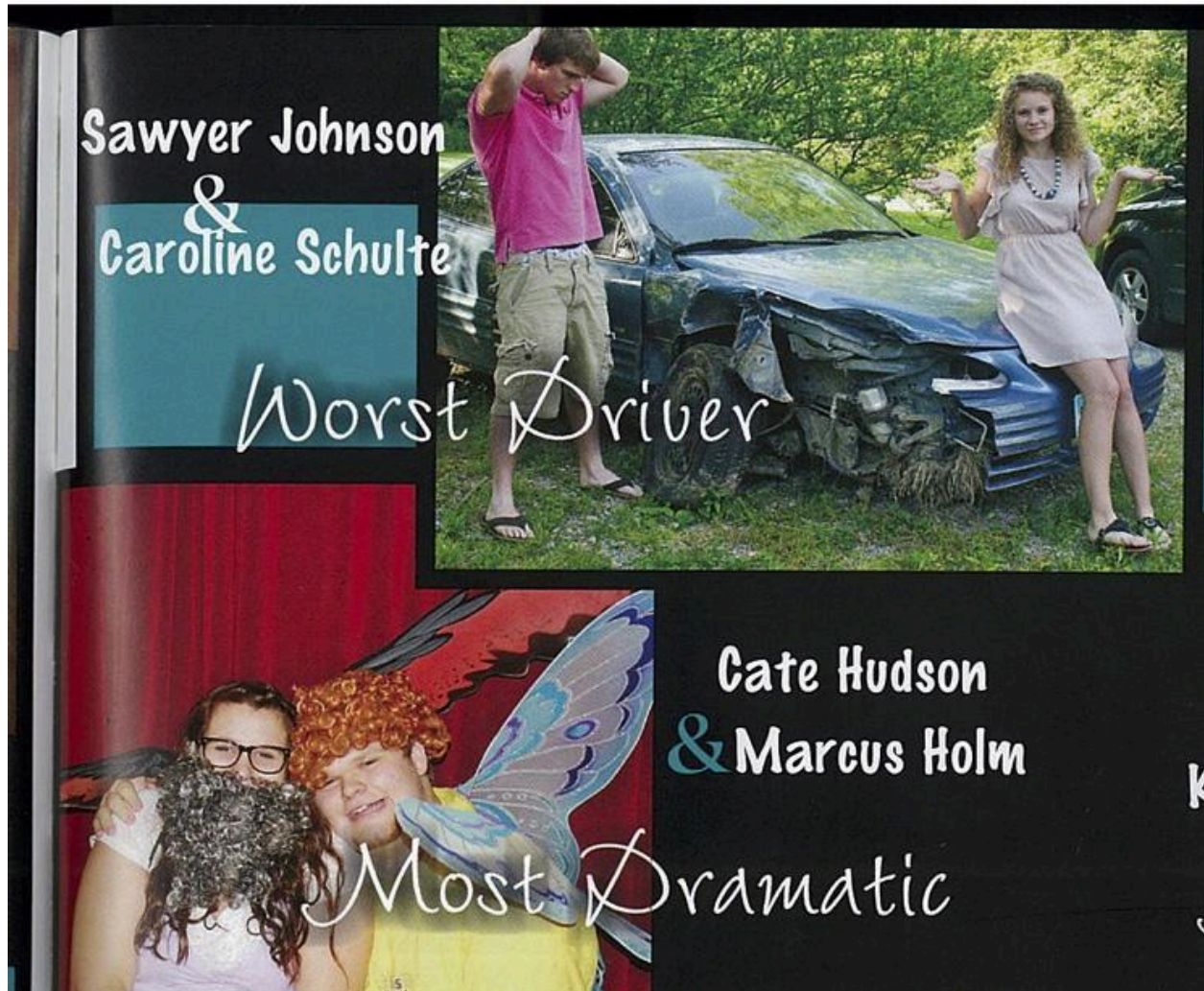
W: I will just be forever grateful that Mrs. Aerni was my cooperating teacher, because she just taught me so much. I only ever had male Social Studies teachers who were coaches and they were big and tough and so different than me. So I couldn't really envision myself as a teacher until I saw Mrs. Aerni and how she was in class. I think in the beginning I tried to emulate her but she was like, "You have to find the way you're comfortable with the kids so it isn't fake. You have to have the connection and also be teaching." I just have her to thank for absolutely everything. The middle school is so lucky to have her.

J: Favorite moment of this year so far was winning the first football game against Preble Shawnee 41-7. The game was on my 26th birthday, I got my first paycheck, we won, and two of the Running Backs (which is the position group I coach) had over 100 yards rushing and 2 touchdowns each (combined they had over 250 rushing yards and 4 touchdowns). It was a pretty memorable day.

TT: Lastly, what are you most looking forward to for this school year?

W: Oh my gosh, so much. At Open House, it was the most beautiful feeling in the world to have former students come up and say hi. I'm so blessed and happy to be here so, honestly, just getting to know the students, because they make it worth it. Every day I just hope that you guys just find a career that makes you as happy every day that I am because I could not have ever imagined that I could enjoy going to work this much.

J: The opportunity to help kids become the best versions of themselves. When I went to Talawanda I was a bit of a trouble maker and I had a lot of great teachers help me find my way. I hope to have the same impact on future generations of students.



Mr. Johnson won a senior superlative in 2012...let's hope he's improved his driving since then.