

Story Behind The Glasses

By Ryan Lovingier

(All photos courtesy of Andrew Gitner)



Golden High School has very formidable teachers in its English department, one of them being 33-year-old Andrew Gitner, known as Mr. Gitner in his classroom. In the halls, there is nothing but good talk about this beloved teacher, but everyone only knows him in-school; what about outside of school?

Gitner grew up near the Big Apple, specifically an hour away from New York City where “there are more cows than people.” He always knew that New York wasn't a permanent home for him as he couldn't find a teaching job and he refused to work in Manhattan as it “smelled bad” so he moved to the Mile High City at the age of 23.

When he saw that Denver Public Schools had a job opening, he jumped at the chance and moved, despite Denver looking “desperate.”

Gitner wanted to teach, but he specifically wanted to teach Sophomore and Junior English considering that in his own Sophomore year of high school his Honors English teacher, Dr. Schnieder, gave him a true opening of meaning, “She showed me that you could see meaning and things and patterns and stuff that like, made life seem purposeful. And like there was some reason to be in it.” He worked at a small Jeffco charter school before working at Golden, so Jeffco wasn't a county that was new for him; however, Golden's community definitely opened his eyes to how close Golden is. During COVID, teachers “banded” together to make teaching from home as easy as possible.

“We had to advocate and organize and get together. We got to put in the teacher contract; the community really rallied together to do what we thought would be best for our students,”

That might not have impacted his teaching, but it still was an important moment for him to see how close Golden's community truly is. Teaching seems boring but Gitner tries to make teaching interesting with “clapping, clapping. Yelling? I don't know. Actually, no. I tell jokes. I do. I could speak a lot of teacher jargon right now,” sharing that he's not afraid to show his personality to his class. With his teaching techniques, Gitner has also been known to be super philosophical and that may confuse some but make perfect sense to others. We saw that when we asked about his favorite book to teach, it is “a book



about the Vietnam War, that's not about the Vietnam War" ("The Things They Carried" by Tim O'Brien).

His philosophical words can make sense, sometimes. If you understand his speaking ways then congrats, but if not don't worry, you'll catch on to the language of Gitner. With more on his lessons, he definitely has his times where teaching doesn't seem so simple compared to other times in the school year. He states, "the hardest part of the school year for me is before students get back, because it feels purposeless. Like, if I'm a teacher, and there's no students, what am I?" to ensure that teaching isn't just making sure students understand, but students are the reason teachers are here.



As many people know, Gitner has ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and was formally diagnosed at 30. As a fellow neurodivergent, hearing how this everyday teacher was able to go through life finding his own way to tackle the challenges the diagnosis comes with, gives me, and others, a lot of inspiration. He shared how living with ADHD makes life "-cost more money" and his own tactics he uses in his day to day life such as "tricking" himself into completing easily procrastinated chores. Despite the "lack of eye contact to the inability to tell a story," the diagnosis doesn't change him as this is all he's known. ADHD just gives a name to what's happening in his brain.

Gitner doesn't hide behind his diagnosis as he shares that "telling you my medical diagnosis is easy," yet sharing his family life definitely had deeper thoughts than anyone could have predicted.

Growing up his view on family was blurred, as some things that he considered normal would be seen as "weird" to others. Throughout his childhood, he would hear his parents argue frequently and eventually "-hearing my parents fight, and just assuming they were always gonna get a divorce" became normal. The heavy experiences only got worse as his family now doesn't visit him, "But the implication of that is, like, I'm not enough of a reason to go to a place." While his



experiences of family may be very heavy, he is happy with his wife, Elizabeth, his "very geriatric cat" and his dog. Elizabeth has had a very important role in Gitner's life, and as he says "My wife is phenomenal." displaying his ring after stating his love for his partner. Gitner and his wife's plan isn't to have kids and instead spoil their dogs stating "Those dogs are gonna want for nothing," and his friends also have an important role in his life as

well since he moved out here with a few of them. When roles come into play of people's characteristics, morals can play a part too.

Morals seem to bond people in one way or another with certain aspects forming us as humans. Morals is a hard term to really define for anyone, but when really asked and taken the time

to think about it, they really show how you anticipate the world. When asked about his morals, he didn't know what to say immediately yet his response was not any less powerful: "I think that humility ought to be a guiding value in people's lives...humility, but not just thinking that I'm not worth sharing or asking for things. Humility also means knowing that there is- that there are some things that I have I'm very strong in and the willingness to share that with other people."

Gitner is a man of many words, and when you give him the time and let him have proper consideration, his words tell a story. They tell the story behind the glasses.