

# New artwork spices up Durant hallways

By Koby Paulsen

During the summer of 2019, Durant High School spent almost \$8,000 on hallway artwork to liven up the appearance of the school.

School Principal Mr. Joel Diederichs said the artwork was designed to keep the school spirit up and added that he “didn’t like the white walls.”

Four Durant employees and a former student spent a month and a half painting the artwork, including Bobbi Regan, Denise Ahrens, Tracy Grunder, Brinn Grunder, and Steph Frett.

Mrs. Regan said she wanted to help improve the looks of our halls.

“I wanted to help brighten up the school and contribute my thoughts. I wanted to take a little pride in our school as well.”

When students first enter the high school, they will notice above the high school office a new sign saying “Welcome to Durant: Home of the Wildcats,” along with blue and gold stripes running above the trophy cases.

When the students begin to make their way to class, they will see a painted section saying “Welcome to Wildcat Country,” along with two quotes.

One quote from Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps says, “There will be obstacles. There will be doubters. There will be mistakes. But with hard work there are no



Photo by Koby Paulsen

Durant High School students were greeted with new artwork around the school, including a new sign above the office.

limits.” The other quote encourages students to give everything their best: “Champions don’t show up to get everything they want; they show up to give everything they have.”

Hanging above their lockers in the downstairs hallway, students can also see poster-sized photos of student activity. Also added over the summer was the Durant Wildcats’ Memorial Hallway located adjacent to the principal’s office, where there are various paintings and a memorial to Durant student Emily Bohnsack, who died in a car accident in 2010.

The final project in the high school wing was the East stairway painted by Durant art teacher Mr. Chris McMahon. Last summer Mr. McMahon added an outline of

the school mascot and a large D in the West staircase, taking him “several weeks if not a month,” and added a lifelike Wildcats painting in the East staircase this summer. Mr. McMahon said he also does not approve of the look of our previously white walls.

“I’m in agreement with our principal that straight up white or eggshell colored walls are boring and suck the creativity out of people’s brains,” he said.

The high school was not the only area of the school to receive a makeover. As students walk down towards the elementary school, they will notice the same blue-and-gold stripes running down the halls as in the high school commons. Also down the hallway is a stenciled piece of art created by

SportsGraphics, Inc., of Clarion, Iowa.

Continuing down the hallway towards the elementary wing, students will notice a new piece of artwork saying “Future Wildcats.” Finally, as students arrive at the lunch room, they will notice a series of blue-and-gold panels near the elementary doors.

Senior Brendan Paper said he enjoys the new look of the hallway.

“It looks a lot better having blue and gold around the school instead of white walls,” he said.

Junior Brooklyn Bullard said the new look represents our school better.

“It’s cool,” she said. “It’s better to have artwork on our walls that represents our school.”

## Shared superintendent ready for 2nd year

By Ellie Olsen

Being a superintendent at rival schools can be intimidating, but for Mr. Joe Burnett it seems to be a breeze. Mr. Burnett will be starting his second year as a superintendent at the Durant and Wilton Community School Districts.

In a recent interview with Mr. Burnett over the dual position, he sounded eager and excited to start the upcoming school year.

“[I’m] looking forward to starting the second year,” said Mr. Burnett, who has two children, a daughter in seventh grade and a son who recently graduated high school. Mr. Burnett has had plenty of experience working with students prior to being a superintendent. He first started out in Wilton as a junior high math teacher and coached

junior high athletics, then he progressed to the Wilton High School principal before taking on the role of superintendent there.

When Mr. Burnett first heard about the position opening up at Durant, he was immediately drawn to the challenge this position faced. He also thought of the benefits both districts would gain if he took the position at Durant.

“Each district receives financial compensation for sharing, but then each district also saves money by splitting the superintendent’s contract,” said Mr. Burnett. “It was a win/win for both districts.”

However, the benefits weren’t the only thing that drew him to this position.

“I’ve gotten to know a lot of great people at Durant,” said Mr. Burnett, which encouraged him even more to embrace the

role as the new superintendent.

Mr. Burnett said that the goals of the 2019-2020 school year are “building upgrades/improvements, giving high school students more opportunities in CTE programming, and just improving overall academic achievement.”

Many updates to the building have already been completed under the guidance of Mr. Burnett last school year, and the student body is looking forward to even more improvements this year.

“The biggest challenge is trying not to get stretched too thin,” Mr. Burnett said. As one would assume, being a superintendent for one district already requires a lot of attention and responsibilities. Mr. Burnett mentioned in the interview that sometimes it is hard to find a good balance between the

responsibilities required by both districts. However, he has said that the updated technology has been very helpful for communication between the two districts. He also mentioned that he enjoys going to both district’s concerts and ball games.

Mr. Burnett said that his favorite part of being a superintendent for both districts is getting to know the Durant community and the kids more.

“I’ve really enjoyed working with the teachers, the school board, and the students,” said Mr. Burnett, who has a passion for working with young people and even mentioned that he has had a lot of fun expanding the number of students he gets to work with. One piece of advice Mr. Burnett has for students is to “work hard, work smart, and have fun, in that order!”

## 3 veteran teachers join Durant High School staff

By Timothy Junis

Durant High School welcomes three new teachers in the 2019-2020 school year, including two veteran teachers who re-

located from the Davenport school district. These three teachers are Mr. Joshua Garien, Mrs. Hailey Houk, and Mrs. Cinnamon Kleeman.

Mr. Garien will be teaching Environmental Science, Anatomy, Biology, and Advanced Biology. Mrs. Houk is teaching Earth Science, Physical Science, Chemistry, and Anatomy. Mrs. Kleeman will be the 7-12 grade choir director.

Mr. Garien was very adamant about his goals for this school year.

“I would like to get new science books because the Biology ones we have are from 2003,” he said. Mr. Garien also wanted the upcoming students to experience a more updated style of learning.

Mr. Garien explained that the community has been very welcoming and has brought him in with open arms. He also said that it has been very easy to adjust to this new position. Two things he especially liked was the calm environment and how the administration follows through with their promises. He said that his previous school had an issue with this.

The new technology Durant High School added has been a drastic change to the learning environment for Mr. Garien. He said that the TV’s in his room are a great tool with its Airplay feature. Mr. Garien likes the new technology and plans to incorporate it into the curriculum in his classes.

Mrs. Hailey Houk, a DHS alumni, has come back to teach at her alma mater. She was very involved with the sports and activities at Durant. Some activities Mrs. Houk participated in while attending Durant High School were volleyball, softball, track, golf, and choir.

The main goal for Mrs. Houk this school year is to “get the curriculum figured out.” She said that she would be learning along with the students in some classes like chemistry.

Her previous school that she taught at was Smart Intermediate in Davenport.

When asked about her experience there, she said she was “tired of being a glorified babysitter.” A large reason why the DHS grad returned was to give her child the same schooling experience that she had. Mrs. Houk wanted her child to have some of the same teachers that left an impact on her life.

Mrs. Houk explained that she thoroughly enjoyed the technological innovation at Durant. A few things she enjoys about it is how fast the internet feels and just how cool she thinks the iPads are. She hopes to use them in her classes a lot.

Ms. Cinnamon Kleeman, the new 7-12th grade choir director, had only one goal that she was focused on her inaugural year. She wanted to help grow an atmosphere for learning music and having fun. Next year she plans to bring back Chamber Choir as a class.

Ms. Kleeman previously taught at Fort Dodge and Weber City school districts. She had been a teacher for six years before returning to school to get her masters in music education. The impression she got was that Durant had a supportive community. So far she has adjusted well to the district, saying, “I really like the people here.”

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Rylee Page is a senior at Durant High School and has played an active role in the school’s extracurricular clubs including NHS, Drama Club, Student Council, and Yearbook. Page, the NHS president, has a few club ideas for this year including volunteering at the VA Hospital as well as Kings Harvest Homeless Shelter.



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