

Rob Tressler

“Adolescents have always been where my heart’s at,” said Salida High School counselor Robert Tressler, as he sat at his desk, work scattered around. He’s been the High School Counselor for nearly a decade, and has worked in the district for nearly two. But it was announced that after this school year, he’ll be saying goodbye to this job.

Tressler didn’t grow up in Colorado, and he had a long journey to get here. “I grew up outside of Philadelphia, a town called Abington. That was an extremely rough neighborhood. Walking to school I’ve been shot at, I’ve been stabbed for not joining gangs,” said with an almost saddening nonchalance. “It was good and bad,” he elaborated. “The city life was good ‘cause we had a lot of opportunities and different cultural experiences, like our field trips. We went to the liberty bell, independence hall, and saw the historical buildings. That really got me into social studies and history and things like that. The down side was, we lived in a neighborhood that I’ve seen fights, family fights, gun fights, things like that.”

High school was a different time in Tressler’s life. He struggled keeping his grades up, despite being sharp. “I enjoyed high school socially. I fit in fine; I didn’t have any issues there. But I didn’t have a solid

home life,” Tressler said. “My dad was a quadriplegic, so he was in a wheelchair. My parents separated, and my dad didn’t care about homework, so honestly I didn’t do much homework. I didn’t have anyone asking for it. So that didn’t help, academically. But I was smart enough to get by with decent C’s, mostly C’s.” Living in a rough neighborhood, he had to be someone he wasn’t, something that really hurts him. “You had to be this hard person in the city or else you got beat up. It created someone I wasn’t. I was like ten years old and 40 pounds, I wasn’t this big intimidating guy. I had to act tough, so I wouldn’t get beat up,” he said. “That created this hardened kid who I didn’t want to be.” He knew he wanted out. “I knew I wanted better in life, and I knew college was the only way out of that.”

In college, everything changed for him. “I went to Penn State. But at that point, in college, I thrived. The atmosphere was great,” he said. “Once I graduated college, I worked in residential treatment facilities for abused kids and things like that. Then I did two years of Americorp, and that paid for my masters degree. That’s when I went into school counseling.”

Tressler has spent a lot of time in Salida, working in the district since he moved here in 2004. “At that time, the

middle school had an alternative classroom, so the middle school would send at-risk students there. I was a school counselor there for a year, and then in 2005 the middle school counselor retired. I stayed there until 2010, and then in 2010 the high school counselor retired. The district decided not to fill that position and only went to two counselors.” After that, Tressler became the sole high school counselor and the Principal of Horizons Exploratory Academy, jobs that he found incredibly stressful but fulfilling. “That was a tough task. Those were two full time jobs and I never had high school experience. I basically worked with 15 and younger,” he said. “I was part of building that program, and my educational philosophy would be the educational environment needs to change, not the student. So since Horizons is designated as an alternative education environment, you have more flexibility in how students earn credits. That provided a different pathway for every kid.”

“When I got to the high school, this is what I got for training,” he chuckled, holding up a calendar. But he said that these two jobs, even after he left his principal position after three years, provided a unique opportunity to make the school more accessible for all kids. “That’s when I went back to my high school experience. What would I enjoy,

Co-ops, internships, and we started figuring that out.”

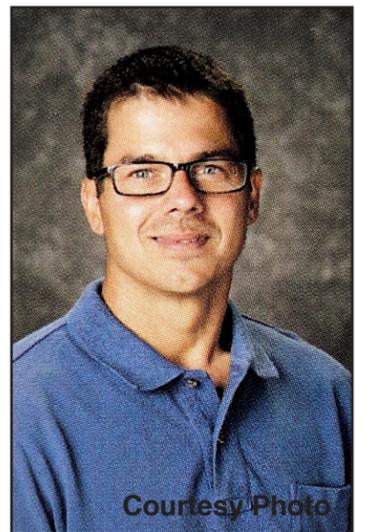
During his time at the high school, Tressler focused on developing alternative ways of teaching, and making sure all students felt fulfilled. “Trying to find ways to break up the traditional high school model is always a good challenge for me,” he said. “I just remember being in high school and not necessarily enjoying the sitting there for eight hours. I know that can be hard. [...] I see it now with my own kid. Like [my daughter] is a great artist, and she went through Longfellow not being enriched in that subject because of Longfellow’s traditional learning environment. She’s not thinking about being an artist because she hasn’t been enriched, and that’s heartbreaking.”

But as the years went on, Tressler felt fairly burnt out. It was a lot of work, a long schedule, and it wasn’t really what he wanted to be doing. “With a counselor, you get bogged down with a lot of testing and a lot of scheduling. I was the only counselor for so long. It felt like you were getting farther away from the student.” He wants to “work with youth at risk. That’s the foundation of my career. That was me as a child, that’s where I felt like I connected with the most.” He also said it has always been a hard job, emotionally. “It can be difficult to see a kid’s home life. See them work through that, but knowing that they

Story by Gwen Ramsey and Vander Ritchie

have to go back to that same home, and you can’t really change that. That’s emotionally difficult, and I think sometimes, professionally and personally, it’s hard to separate that. Even after 20 years of being a counselor; that’s tough.”

After this year, Tressler plans to start a private practice, all while keeping the door open to other counseling opportunities and continuing to do Drivers Education. “Going back to why I got into this in the first place was to help kids. In 2006, I was certified to be a licensed professional counselor, so I’m a licensed psychotherapist. I can provide mental help.” He’s hopeful that this will give him an interesting opportunity to return to what he has always cared about. “Life will be alright,” he reassured us.



Courtesy Photo

Counselor Rob Tressler



Courtesy Photo

Administrative assistant
Richelle Diesslin.

Richelle Diesslin

Change is a theme in Salida High School right now, and with change comes goodbyes. Richelle Diesslin, the administrative assistant, is leaving the school district at the end of this year. She is known for her kind and warm personality; she truly is a bright light here at SHS.

Diesslin was born in Denver and moved to Salida when

she was five years old. In her adult life, she worked as a legal secretary in Denver, but moved back to Salida after getting engaged to her husband and started working for him. Her husband was involved in the construction of the new Salida High School, and at that time she was looking for a career change and applied; she’s been in the district

for nine years now.

“The rest is history,” said Diesslin.

When asked what she would miss most about working here, Diesslin replied with, “the kids. I love the kids, and my coworkers. I just love everything about here.”

An incentive to work here was the ability to see her two children come through, but as they’ve gotten older, she feels that it’s time to move on.

Story by Scarlett Campbell

After leaving the school, Diesslin plans to help her husband with his work and investments, while also doing the things she loves. She plans to ride her horse more, travel, and spend time with her family and children.

Salida High is sad to see her leave, but we wish her the best. Her bubbly personality will truly be missed.

Mary Weber

As this year is coming to an end, Salida High School is saying goodbye to a beloved staff member, Mary Weber, who during her time in the district has been adored by teachers and students alike.

Weber is the interventionist here at SHS. She has been in the district for three years now but a teacher since 1980. She started teaching on the Navajo Reservation outside of

Gallup, New Mexico in a small town called “Many Farms” at a Bureau of Indian Affairs K-12 dormitory school, where the children were housed and went to school.

Weber has a degree in science education. She taught biology and earth science throughout her twenties, but then changed her path and chose to follow her interest in English Second Language

(ESL) education after realizing that a main struggle for students was not knowing how, or struggling to, read. After moving to Colorado, she went back to school and received her degree in elementary education and committed herself to the goal that every child in her classroom would be able to read at grade level.

“I enjoy seeing students learn through encouragement and positive reinforcement,”

said Weber. “Students get excited about their learning and I find such joy in teaching.”

This summer she plans on going to Peru to hike the Machu Picchu Trail while also continuing her passion and dedication to ESL education. In a town called Loreto located in the Baja Peninsula, she plans to teach elementary school students and adults in after school programs.

Although goodbye’s are always bittersweet, we wish

Story by Scarlett Campbell

Weber the best, and she will be greatly missed by all here at SHS.



Courtesy Photo

Interventionist Mary Weber poses on her bike.