

# Welcoming Lara Richardson

Story by Scarlett Campbell

This just in: Salida High School has a new teacher! Lara Richardson joined our wonderful SHS staff in October of this year after Audrey Gamache's departure.

Richardson was born and raised in Newport Beach, California but moved to Colorado when she was six years old. After graduating high school in Denver, she attended the University of Northern Colorado where she received her undergraduate degree in Secondary English Education.

During her school years, Richardson was involved in her school's newspaper. Along with teaching English she also serves as the new adviser for The Tenderfoot Times.

Looking back on her education she reflected, "I think high school was harder for me, I wasn't the most academic student, [...] I barely got into college at UNC and was actually on academic probation. In high school I just wasn't inspired but

something about college just lit a fire under me. I realized that I had my whole life ahead of me and that I was the one in charge of it."

After graduating college, Richardson taught briefly at an alternative high school. But soon she got married and started a family and after the arrival of her first child, she decided to put a hold on teaching to focus on her family. Five kids and two decades later, she went back to school to receive her Master's Degree in creative writing from Western Colorado University.

This is Richardson's first teaching job in almost 22 years and she is loving every second of it. "It's been a lot of fun getting to know my students, and everyone has been very welcoming. I love learning and I enjoy seeing other people learn."

Richardson is a very devoted wife and mother and has been very open about her love of motherhood. She met her husband through

her job as a rafting and rock climbing guide after a week-long backpacking trip together in the Collegiate Peaks. The Richardsons have five children, Grace (22), Naomi (20), Abe (18), Life (16), and Esther (6), whom they adopted. "We took our four kids on our first family rafting trip down the San Juan for a week. We got home around 10 pm since our girls wanted to be back for Homecoming the next day, and at two in the morning we got a phone call from social services. An hour later, two police officers brought six-week-old Esther to our door."

Richardson and her husband Andrew are also avid ranchers and run the Richardson Cattle Company together with their extended family. "The ranch ties us to the earth, the seasons, the sunrise and sunset, the temperature, and also to where our food comes from. It ties us to life," she explained.



Courtesy Photo

FAMILY: Lara Richardson stands with her beautiful family. Pictured from left to right: Grace (22), Life (16), Esther (6), Richardson, Husband Andrew, Abe (18), Naomi (20), and Richardson's father-in-law.

They mostly raise cows and hay. Richardson's children are also very active ranchers. "Our kids have all grown up ranching, irrigating and cutting hay, driving tractors, moving cows and branding calves. It's a great place to raise kids, and I absolutely love it."

Richardson also has a fondness for gardening and has a new ongoing obsession with dino kale. She has a passion for reading and

writing and spends a great deal of time devoting herself to those activities.

Richardson also finds herself very strong in her faith. "Being outside is a sanctuary. Everywhere I look I see God showing me he's real by what he's made."

Through all of Richardson's many jobs and loves, the common theme is growth. We can't wait to see how she grows here and leaves her mark at SHS.

## Winter Choir Concert



Courtesy Photo

SINGERS: The Salida High School Choir performs their winter concert on December 7th. The set list consisted of Carol of the Bells, sung acapella; African Noel, a traditional African Folksong and Jingle Bell Rock. Pictured above, left to right, sophomores Jessica Clinton and Scarlett Campbell, and senior Rebecca Russell performing a solo. Below, left to right, are junior Elsie Sanchez, sophomore Alli Bradford, and senior Mackenzie Hall playing percussion for African Noel.



Courtesy Photo

## Thank You, Tolsma

Story by Amelia Hobbs

Meryl Tolsma does so much for Salida High School. Not only is she the school counselor, but she is the coordinator for 504's, which is a plan for kids with disabilities and the AP coordinator. She is also for coordinating the collection, evaluation, and dissemination of all academic, support, and administrative units. She has the same workload as a two person job.

She said that the deadlines and wanting to make sure that she is available to each student and the staff are the most stressful part. "I feel like I'm barely keeping up; I'm trying to be organized and intentional with time."

Tolsma trying to manage her time by using a task list, her calendar, and just working as much as she can. She also manages the stress by trying to make time for her family, fun, and workouts. Although she works a lot of the time, Tolsma doesn't mind being busy or stress.

Likewise, Tolsma said that helping the kids is positive stress. "I think this is different from being stressed in a negative way. When I can't get everything done and I

feel that I'm letting people down."

Despite having a lot to do, Tolsma still makes time to meet with students which she loves, "Kids are awesome and interesting and exciting and fun!"

Tolsma also said that she loves helping students through hard times. Her office is available for students suffering shorter mental health challenges, which is a big part of her job: "Address short term mental health issues, [and] meet with students about mental health issues that need to be referred to longer term care"

Tolsma likes to hear everyone's stories. She said that everyone has a story that helps define them. She

uses the students' stories to help them achieve their goals. On top of loving all the students she said she loves the staff. So many students here have made very deep bonds with her.

Tolsma explained, "I try to develop a bond with all students at SHS and the relationships we develop are lifelong."

She cares very deeply about all the students who attend SHS. "There is so much to be said about why [the students are] my favorite part, but mostly because I truly love each individual student and their unique personalities. [...] Students are the heart and soul of this school and the joy of this work. They make every day interesting."



Courtesy Photo

SALIDA High School