

Teaching: A Dream Come True

By Chris Collier

I began my journey as a full-time teacher this summer, teaching high school business courses in Jacksonville, Arkansas at Lighthouse Charter School College Preparatory Academy (CPA). Exhausting, exhilarating, exciting, challenging, and so much more....but most of all – rewarding! I love my scholars and already cannot imagine doing anything else.

Originally from Hot Springs, a Hendrix grad, and a Little Rock resident for over 30 years, I have had a lifetime of experiences that lead me to recognize teaching as my calling. I originally worked as a financial advisor and manger and became aware of the impact I could have on students through multiple volunteer experiences including Volunteers in Public Schools, the Hugh O’Brian Youth Foundation, Junior Achievement, and coaching and classroom guest speaking. Additionally, I founded a business offering youth sports tournaments and sought out an opportunity for a long term substitute teaching position which further confirmed my desire to become an educator. Now, the Arkansas Teacher Corps program at the University of Arkansas has helped allow me to teach full time at Jacksonville Lighthouse CPA, a charter school in Pulaski County.

While not coming up through the traditional ranks to become a teacher, I am excited about the opportunity afforded me via Arkansas Teacher Corps (ATC). ATC provides a rigorous training and professional development platform that has been instrumental in preparing me to teach, this year and beyond. I spent six weeks in El Dorado, Arkansas attending instructional classes and having the opportunity to teach at both El Dorado High School and the El Dorado Boys and Girls Club. Opportunities to instruct, receive instruction, be videotaped, observed, reflect personally and more has provided a unique and lasting base from which I can build and grow. The instruction and feedback from ATC staff and leadership has left an indelible impression on me, and has further inspired me to be the very best I possibly can be, for myself, but ultimately for my students. And the best part? ATC is still standing by my side, providing ongoing classroom observations and feedback, training and development, and thankfully, they are only a phone call or e-mail away when I need help with questions or concerns as I continue to grow while facing new challenges each day. I even have a personal mentor assigned to me, and in my case, it is the same person that helped train and guide me all summer in El Dorado!

My background, life and work experiences and professional network allow me to bring a unique approach to my five business classes at Jacksonville Lighthouse CPA. I have already had 25+ year veterans from advertising and marketing, banking and brokerage visit my classroom as guest lecturers, giving my scholars an opportunity that few have in their high school years to meet, interact with, and question professionals in these fields. My advertising and marketing class is so excited they have decided to structure themselves as an advertising firm of sorts, aligning themselves with interests within the school to help promote and raise awareness. Partnering with the yearbook and newspaper staff is on the horizon, and they want to develop a green awareness campaign for the school!

So there you have it, my call to teach. At the tender young age of 55, many may have thought (and probably did!) that I was too old to pursue this new adventure. Thankfully, the leadership of Arkansas Teacher Corps saw the value in my age and experience, and witnessed the passion and drive I have to do all I can to help the youth of our state every way possible. So what about you? Have you thought about exploring the possibility



ATC Fellow Chris Collier authored the following op-ed in September 2014 in the Jacksonville Patriot.

of making a difference in the lives of others via teaching? If even remotely so, then please do yourself a favor and reach out to ATC and apply today! They are looking for qualified candidates for their 2015 corps; take the initiative today to apply at www.arkansasteacher corps.org. I look forward to sharing with you all the wonderful experiences that accompany teaching, and ATC stands ready to provide all the training and support you need.

-----v-----

Chris Collier is a first-year business teacher at Jacksonville Lighthouse Charter School College Preparatory Academy and a member of the 2014 cohort of the Arkansas Teacher Corps (www.arkansasteacher corps.org).

Commentary on 9/18/2014 in the Jacksonville Patriot <http://pulaskinews.net/jacksonville-patriot/news/local/teaching-dream-come-true.html> .