



English and journalism teacher Chris Holmes of Hazelwood West High School in Hazelwood, Missouri, is the second Truman graduate to receive the Missouri Teacher of the Year (TOY) award, presented by The Missouri Department of Education. Holmes is best known for helping found Project Walk, a program designed to help at-risk students graduate. Holmes will represent Missouri in the National Teacher of the Year competition, and will be honored at a banquet Oct. 27.



Submitted photo
Holmes cheers on Hazelwood West High School students at their Powderpuff football game. He is very involved in student activities such as the Powderpuff football game, Special Olympics and student journalism.



Submitted photo
Missouri Teacher of the Year Chris Holmes speaks to students at Hazelwood West High School at an assembly for HWHS's Writers' Week. Holmes is an alumnus of the education program at Truman State.



What made you finally decide on education as your major?



"When I was speaking to this group of wide-eyed teenagers [while I was in college at High School Journalism day], something clicked. Then sparked. Then caught fire."



What at Truman inspired you to become a teacher?



"[My advisor] Les Dunseith instilled in me a passion for knowledge and a drive to share that knowledge."



What is your basic philosophy on teaching?



"When students feel noticed and valued, they are more willing to work, learn and show respect to both their classmates and themselves."



What is the most important thing a teacher should keep in mind?



"No grudges and no ultimatums. It is remarkable the difference it makes, not just in developing relationships with students, but also in fostering a healthy learning environment."



What were your first reactions when you found out you won this award?



"When you receive an honor such as this I think the first reaction surprise, which is quickly followed by "I don't deserve this."



What is one piece of advice you would give to future educators?



"Be prepared, know your stuff and share it with enthusiasm and passion. And, always be willing to forgive — always."

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