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# New principal begins first year with optimism

By Jordan Watkins

Chris Botts didn't plan on leaving Complete High School Maize. He loved his job at the small alternative school of 60 students. But when Maize High's 1,400 students needed a new principal, he decided it was a challenge he wanted to take on.

"I wanted to see if I could do it," Botts said. "I wanted to see if I could bring my personality and the things I believe to Maize High School."

Botts worked at Complete for 14 years, his last seven in administration. Kristy Custer, who has replaced Botts as principal of Complete, said he is a servant leader who enjoys seeing others happy.

"The character trait that I most admire about him is his work ethic," she said. "There may be people who know more than Chris, but there are few people who will ever outwork him."

He received his bachelor's in secondary-education math from Kansas State University before completing his master's in school leadership from Baker University. He is working on getting his doctorate from Kansas State.

Botts and his wife, Mollie, a 1995 Maize grad, have a 4-year-old daughter named Reese and a 6-month-old son named Braylon.

Botts said his transition to Maize High has gone well.

"People have gone out of their way to make me feel welcome and comfortable," he said.

The size of the school was the biggest difference that Botts has had to adjust to.

"I knew it was going to be big, but I guess I didn't know how big," he said.

Botts wants students to enjoy their time in high school. He envisions a more open, more connected Maize High.

"I loved high school; it was a great experience for me," he said. "My goal is to make it a great experience for every student here."

Botts plans to accomplish that goal by helping students and staff members build "relationships that can last for a lifetime."

"I want students to have that connection to a teacher and teachers to have that connection to a student," he said.

Custer said "his ability to think outside of the typical brick and mortar school will be a breath of fresh air to the Maize High School staff."

Botts said that if students and staff come to Maize High with a good attitude and excitement for their school, "everything will take care of itself."

"If we can create an environment that kids want to be at, that teachers are happy to be at, the potential is unlimited," he said. "You can accomplish anything in education when you have those two things." ■



MATT POGUE

Principal Chris Botts began at Maize High this year after spending 14 at Complete.



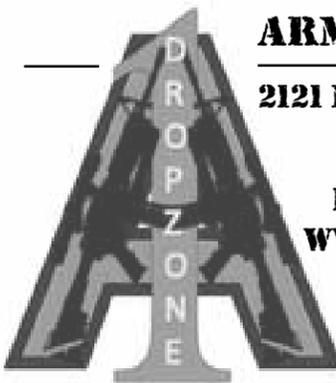
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