

Featured Artist: Brett Mulnix

New art teacher brings unique background to KMC

BY MIKAELA MEYER, circulation manager

Art teacher Brett Mulnix's path to teaching has been 32 years in the making. Metalwork, the highway patrol and a major medical procedure all affected his journey to Kapaun Mt. Carmel. "Towards the end of my first year [of college], I started making jewelry and realized I had the ability to do that," Mulnix said, who had started out as a history major with the intent to teach. "In a very short amount of time, I decided to quit school and start a business."

His business, Custom Goldworks Gallery, was based in Loveland, Colorado where he ran it with his ex-wife.

"Within three years, I had the idea to start building towards opening my own location," Mulnix said. "I was doing work for other jewelers, and at a certain point, I scraped up enough money and sold everything of value...to be able to open a location on my own."

After a few years, he also completed a graduate gemologist degree at the Gemological Institute of America. Junior Emily Schoeppner is currently in Mulnix's 3D Art Technique class.

"My first impression [of Mulnix] was that he seemed very enthusiastic about sharing his passion for art," Schoeppner said. "It was easy to see that he has a vast knowledge about 3D art, specifically jewelry. That impression hasn't really changed. In fact, it is more and more evident everyday how much he puts into every piece."

Fifteen years into owning and operating his business, Mulnix decided to join local law enforcement. He was on the Colorado State Patrol for 15 years and said he loved every minute of it. During this time, he also began to take classes to earn his Bachelor of Arts at night, all while doing work for his company on the side.

"I retired just over three years ago and there were a couple things that made me look at things differently," Mulnix said. "My youngest daughter has a pretty serious illness; she has systemic lupus (where her immune system attacks its own tissue). [At the time,] she needed a kidney transplant, and I was a match for a donor for her, so we did that surgery."

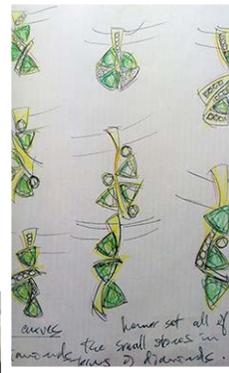
Post-surgery, Mulnix decided to retire from law enforcement and focus on his jewelry business again. But, after 1½ years, he closed the business.

"It wasn't fun in the way it was before," he said. "[It] just became a constant mental challenge that made it so I couldn't focus on creating."

After moving to Wichita, Mulnix began to consider a teaching

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— junior Emily Schoeppner



FROM FIRST SKETCH TO FINAL PRODUCT, art teacher Brett Mulnix's jewelry pieces are displayed in his gallery book. Mulnix as a jewelry maker among other things before he became a teacher. photos courtesy of Brett Mulnix



DURING CERAMICS CLASS OCT. 19, art teacher Brett Mulnix helps sophomore Angelica Rodriguez (left) and senior Caitlin Matheny (right) make stamps to mark their pieces as their own. photo by John Biehler

career. Mulnix said he was on his way to Derby to apply for a position there but did a u-turn and drove back to KMC. He left his resumé at the office, came back the next day for an interview and never interviewed anywhere else.

"The moment I walked in the front door and was greeted by the office staff something told me, 'this is home, this is where I should be,'" Mulnix said. "I'm really grateful that it worked out that way."

Schoeppner said she enjoys having Mulnix as a teacher.

"He stands out among other teachers because he is so passionate about what he teaches and he truly cares about his students and their art," Schoeppner said. "What also stands out to me is how, despite not being Catholic, Mr. Mulnix wants to dedicate part of the classroom to Fr. [Emil] Kapaun and put up Catholic art, truly embracing what is truly important to our school."

Art teacher Will Hiebert said Mulnix's background is helpful.

"He thinks about art in a way that it is a functional piece that fits in the laws of physics," Hiebert said. "That gives him a unique perspective that everything kind of has to work for it to be a valid piece of art, and that helps him, especially since he does so much 3D and ceramics. Your brain kind of has to think like that to be successful."