

KANZIG: Counselor and coach had a long career in Sisters

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In 2013 Kanzig and his family decided to uproot and move to South Korea to teach. He and his wife, Deirdre, a Sisters teacher, had done overseas travel in their college days and wanted to do it again — it was just more complicated to teach internationally, as they have multiple children. The spark to travel internationally was reignited when their son Isaac was a freshman in high school, and all their other children were out of school or in college, so they decided why not try it.

“It was fascinating to go and experience this other culture, and you really learn how the world works,” he said.

Kanzig worked as a college counselor for Korean students looking to get into prestigious Western colleges, and Deirdre taught humanities. He learned of the pressure on the students there to get accepted into these colleges, mostly in Europe and the U.S.

“It was challenging, and a great learning experience to try and help the kids keep perspective, while also dealing with heavily involved parents who are involved in the process and committed,” he said.

The family spent two years in South Korea, and then returned to Sisters where Kanzig requested to return to work in the high school. He worked as the primary counselor at SHS, and Deirdre teaches third-grade students at the elementary school now.

In his career, Kanzig was also the head coach of the cross-country team, and briefly for the track team. He was the head coach of cross-country at the start of his career at Sisters and enjoyed the connections he made with the kids.

“The combination of coaching and counseling allowed me to develop lasting relationships with the students and their families, and have genuine and real

connections,” he said.

Coaching and counseling for such a small district of kids allowed Kanzig to become close with students outside of the school setting. Students of his that are now 30 years old have reached out to him in his retirement, still remembering their time with him as their coach.

“It is really important to have coaches that are in the building and can get to know the students inside and outside the school,” he said.

Not only was Kanzig a veteran counselor and coach, he also kept up his passion for writing and journalism. He became a sports correspondent for *The Nugget Newspaper* and would report on cross country meets and provide unique sports commentary on other events as well. In the summer, he also had a hiking commentary column.

“I enjoyed doing feature stories and new business features especially, seeing how they are starting out and the excitement of where they want to go, much like the excitement students have in school and me getting to hear where they want to go,” he said.

Kanzig will continue his work with *The Nugget* in his retirement, as a columnist and freelance writer.

A job such as counseling comes with ups and downs. Kanzig recalled that when budget cuts required cutting days, it felt to him that the District was leaving things lesser and the struggle to make things happen was more prevalent.

From a counseling perspective, he has noticed the increased level of anxiety in students within the past five years.

“The stress and anxiety levels I see in kids these days is much higher,” he said.

The job has changed in the past few years to dealing more with students’ emotional needs — often quite serious. As an approach to that, he works in accord with other counselors and does referrals to professionals within the community to help, working with them when appropriate to enhance students’ coping skills.

And he connects with parents to get students to where they need to be.

He has worked with students on coping skills, helping them to find people within the school that they go to every day, people that they can connect with and check in — whether that be himself or other teachers.

“Our teachers at Sisters are special and really care for the whole kid and want to help them prosper,” he said.

One of his favorite parts about working in the Sisters schools was how blessed he felt to be working with people that care about helping students succeed in all aspects of life. “Working with our teachers who care so much for our kids made the job more pleasurable, and I felt like I wasn’t in isolation. Our teachers and staff work hard and interact and communicate well with me about checking in with our students,” he said. “(SHS Principal) Joe Hosang, in the past few years I have been back, has been great about trying to support students in new ways and create an even safer environment for them within their school.”

In his retirement, Kanzig plans at first not to fill up his days and plans to get back



PHOTO BY CEILI CORNELIUS

Charlie Kanzig has helped thousands of young people in his tenure as a school counselor.

into his fitness routine as well.

“I want to be available for my adult children and continue on my fitness journey as well as continuing to write,” he said.

Kanzig has also mentored interns from OSU Cascades who are going

into counseling, and one of the interns he mentored who graduated from the program was hired into Kanzig’s position as one of two counselors taking over at Sisters.

“I am extremely grateful for getting to return to SHS for the past four years and finish my career,” he said.

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