



(Football photo courtesy of Michelle Binker for the *Illinois Valley News*)



**Clockwise from left:**  
**No. 7 Caleb Hess runs back a pass interception to give the Cougars possession of the ball during the home loss to Brookings Friday, Sept. 16.**  
**No. 13 Aundrea Miller controls the ball during the ladies' win against Douglas Tuesday, Sept. 13.**  
**Tori Johnson bumps the ball during the home loss to Harrison Friday, Sept. 9.**  
**Jackson Mattock takes a corner kick during the home loss to Bandon Saturday, Sept. 10.**



(Soccer & volleyball photos courtesy of Kelli Augustadt for the *Illinois Valley News*)

# IVHS's Jessica Beck brings science to life

**Annette McGee Rasch**  
*IVN Senior Contributing Writer*

Illinois Valley High School's (IVHS) new science teacher, Jessica Beck, already loves the Illinois Valley. She moved to Kerby in June, after her husband, Jason Beck, had accepted a contractor's job in the area.

"I'm from Gay, Georgia, a little town that is pretty much the size of Cave Junction," Beck said. "So I really appreciate the family feel I find here in the I.V. - it's really wonderful, I feel right at home." Beck and her husband have two children, Georgia, 9, and Jackson, 6, who are now attending school at Evergreen Elementary.

Beck sees her role as a science teacher to help kids learn to like science. "For some kids, by the time they reach high school, they may be turned off from science," she said. "Right now we're focusing on the kids' ability to communicate both in writing and verbally about science concepts, and we'll be doing skits to keep things fun."

To help students see the interconnectedness of scientific principles in everyday life, she utilizes a program called "STEAM" which stands for: science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics.

"They've been back to school just over a week and we've already engineered structures that required the kids to collaborate about science concepts. This hands-on experience helps them gain confidence. I'm out to provide the kids a new perspective on science and when they learn by doing and not just listening, they increase their understanding. Like with the atom, it may be a foreign concept, something they cannot see, so we break it down so that the concepts come to life."

Beck also sees her job as helping the kids better understand real-life issues like climate change. "There was a recent statement put out by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, about how since the industrial revolution, that the climate has been warmed, and the statement shows the actual Co2 levels."

So to help students understand that science, Beck said, "We can build a solar oven and then the kids can see a real life example of how solar processes work. Then we can talk about how the atmosphere acts like a blanket - and that once the heat is there, that these greenhouse gases store up, and what those effects from human activity are."

After Beck earned a bachelor's degree at Georgia Tech, where she'd majored in polymer and textile

chemistry, she worked for five years as an industrial chemist before deciding to become a teacher. "My work in industry helps me bring a lot of real world examples into the classroom. I designed engine parts for GM and also designed road way striping, which is thermal plastics."

After her second year of teaching, Beck returned to college for master's degree in secondary education, with a specialization in chemistry. She has also designed educational course booklets in chemistry, physics and physical science, and possesses strong mathematics skills, which goes hand-in-hand with the sciences. "I am very interested in catapults and the early mathematics that were applied to make these apparatus effective in historical wars," she said.

Beck's favorite physicist is Albert Einstein. "For Einstein, all of science is an effort to understand the mind of God. A lot of people know his famous equation,  $E=mc^3$ , but few understand what it means. Einstein actually theorized the solution about the missing mass of the atom in those years. His formula provided a missing link about how matter becomes pure energy and holds the atom together. Einstein's mastery of that concept is why we won WWII," she explained. "The physicists of those times also helped industry

make the gigantic leaps that resulted in quantum physics that facilitated massive industrial expansion."

Beck enjoys bringing the history of the development of science to her students, to help them better understand why science is so important.

"To appreciate the beauty and the intricacy and the symmetry of the universe, you have to educate yourself in order to get a clearer picture," she said. "It can be really hard to have perspective when we really only know the tip of the iceberg. Also, the more we understand science, the better we realize that there are few absolutes and that life is not black and white. An appreciation and gaining perspective for the world around us and our place in the universe really helps students. So I bring in many real-world examples, from products they utilize to their visits to doctors, this all comes from science

and deeply impacts their lives."

Beck is also pleased with her new colleagues at IVHS. "There are so many wonderful people who work here and they really care about the kids," she said. "It's a real team effort. I feel like I've found a new family here. Also, not all kids live in a traditional two-parent household, so we have to be someone who the kids can talk to here. The strong sense of community is very obvious and the culture at the school is really positive for the kids. I am proud to be I.V."



Courtesy Photo for the *Illinois Valley News*

**The Beck family: Georgia (left), Jessica, Jason and Jackson.**

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