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- Katie Moreno

Katie Moreno is a journalism and yearbook teacher at Seven Lakes High School

A Design for Success

Seven Lakes High School journalism teacher builds inspirational relationships with students

Written by Holly Leger | Photography by Amanda Walton

Katie Moreno has always been passionate about journalism. The Katy native joined the yearbook staff in eighth grade at Mayde Creek Junior High School, and continued her involvement at Mayde Creek High School with dreams of someday becoming a graphic designer or journalist. Years later, Moreno graduated from the University of Houston with a degree in digital media which allowed her to practice various mediums in the journalism world, including print, photography, web design, and video. At first, Moreno started her own freelance design position but decided she wanted something more. “I always wanted to be a journalism teacher. In high school it was my life,” Moreno says.

Making an Impression

Moreno originally started teaching at Seven Lakes High School (SLHS) as a long-term substitute. Principal Ted Vierling says he was proud of Moreno’s performance during that spring semester. “She stepped into a really tough situation at the half-year mark,” Vierling says. “She’s done a fantastic job. She’s really talented in design work and digital graphics.” Moreno has made quite an impression with her students, too. “She really loves being around the kids, and the kids love being around her,” he says. “She’s got a really close-knit group.”



Katie Moreno was raised in Katy and attended Mayde Creek High School



Katie Moreno with students Dana Barker and Lizzie Heintz

Mrs. Moreno the ADVENTURER
Loves skydiving
Likes to waterski with her husband
Enjoys going on road trips
Has a hot pink Kawasaki Ninja 300

One Big Family

Becca Rios, a 2015 SLHS graduate and former newspaper editor, says she loved the intimacy and trust between the staff and Moreno. Now, Rios works on the design team for the *Daily Texan* at the University of Texas. She still has close ties to the SLHS staff though and even paid them a visit during her freshman year of college. “You know each other’s strengths and you share each other’s ideas,” Rios says. “It’s more than a staff, it’s a family.”

Teaching Leadership

Andy Diep, a 2015 SLHS graduate, says Moreno quickly adapted to the classroom in order to help the student staff complete their yearbook on time. Along the way, she helped Diep understand how to be a good editor. “She taught me how to become my own boss and how to construct my own zone. She gave me a lot of freedom over the staff. I was able to lead them in the specific way that I wanted,” says Diep. Now he is studying neuroscience at the University of Texas at San Antonio. However, he will never forget the care and concern Moreno showed him and the other staff members during his time in high school. “She’s really easy to talk to, and she’s always happy. She was always there for me, even for problems outside of school.”

Building Excitement for the Future

Senior newspaper co-editor in chief Naba Saddiq says Moreno does a great job of advising the staff on their news magazine and is careful not to hover, stepping in only when they ask for help. “She constantly reminds us, ‘This is your magazine, not mine,’” Saddiq says. “I like how she really tries to make us look at the positions and work together as a group.” Saddiq has enjoyed high school journalism with Moreno so much that she plans to study it and public relations in college next year. She says Moreno

has been instrumental in advising her on degree plans and career paths. “She doesn’t really get to know each of her classes as whole; she gets to know every single person as an individual,” Saddiq says. “She tries to be a mentor to all of us. She wants to be someone that changes a life. She’s made me really excited for the future.”

Forming Relationships

The authenticity in her relationships with students hasn’t gone unnoticed. Like Saddiq, other students are grateful for Moreno’s genuine concern for their lives and well-being. Senior yearbook design editor Daniela Ornelas says she has been Moreno’s student for three years and considers her more than just a yearbook advisor. “I can talk to her about personal problems and issues, and she’ll be understanding and caring,” Ornelas says. “It’s cool to have an adult there that I can count on at school.” Ornelas has grown close to fellow student-staff members as well, something she contributes to Moreno. “The yearbook staff is super close because she’s always trying to organize field trips and food parties when we’re done with a deadline,” Ornelas says. “We can hang out outside of school without having to do anything yearbook related, and it’s still fun.”

Keeping It Real

Moreno attributes those close relationships to her mission of being “real” with her students. Whether it’s one of her own personal struggles, or a funny moment from her weekend, Moreno tells them about it, hoping it will teach them an important life lesson. To her, those are the most important lessons of all. “I value the authenticity in our relationship. Sometimes teachers aren’t comfortable doing that because it’s vulnerable,” Moreno says. “I hope that they see that it’s the real me, and that they can be that way, too. That’s important in every aspect of life.” **KM**

HOLLY LEGER is a freelance writer who is forever grateful to her favorite journalism professor, the late Mr. Robert Wernsman.