

2010 Cross of Hope Elementary School Staff



Sharon Halstead -Principal

Sharon is from Kenya, East Africa. She received her Elementary Education K-8 degree in 1987 and began her career teaching 6th grade in Denver Public Schools in Colorado. She has taught various grade levels in both public and private schools in Denver and Albuquerque. She and her husband, Gregg, have 4 wonderful children and they have been members of Cross of Hope Church since June of 1993. Sharon has enjoyed directing the youth choir, teen praise band, Rainbow Trail Day Camp, TNT Youth Worship, and MOPS. Outside teaching, her passions include... God and family, music, history, writing, gardening, and roaming the moors of her mother's homeland...Great Britain.

Sarah Clegern-Kindergarten Teacher

Sarah has over ten years of primary teaching experience in the public schools, and she also served as a Director of Children's Ministries for four years. She earned her bachelor's degrees in Elementary Education and Vocal Music Education, and she also holds a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education. Sarah and her fabulous family - husband James and three busy boys - moved to Albuquerque in 2008. She loves being a part of the Cross of Hope Elementary School team.



Carla Rael—Educational Assistant

My name is Carla Rael. I have been a licensed educational assistant since 2001. I have been blessed to have worked at Cross of Hope since 2005. I have a wonderful husband, his name is Jerry and we have a daughter named Brandi who is currently a college student at UNM. Some of the many things I enjoy are: my cocker spaniel Cruella, fishing, camping, reading, gardening, cooking, and of course teaching kindergartners!



Amy McGee—First Grade Teacher

Amy was born and raised in Central Texas; her accent is natural and permanent. She earned her bachelors degree in education from the University of Texas at Austin, with a focus in early literacy. Amy and her husband Brady, enjoy outdoor pursuits and spending time with their daughter, Abby, who attends Cross of Hope Elementary School.



Megan Bye-School Office Manager

Native resident of New Mexico and a long-time member of Cross of Hope. Megan has two beautiful daughters, both of whom attend Cross of Hope Schools. Megan enjoys the performing arts, especially dancing and has been a dance instructor for many years. Megan also enjoys singing, reading and spending time with her girls.



Rosalie Hipple-Second Grade Teacher

Rosalie is a native New Mexican with a large and very close family. She has experience teaching preschoolers all the way up to adults. She has a Master's Degree in Multi-Cultural Education and taught with APS for several years. She loves sharing her love of God with her students as well as her interests in reading, art, writing and performance art. She has been an active member of Cross of Hope for over 10 years and is grateful to be a part of such a vibrant community. She also has a wonderful husband and two beautiful daughters.



Martha Montaña-Third Grade Teacher

Martha is a native of New Jersey. She came to New Mexico in 2000. She received her Elementary Education degree from the University of New Mexico in 2002. She has taught 3rd, 4th and 3rd/4th/5th multi-age. She is married to her wonderful husband, Chuck and has a daughter, Ava who attends Cross of Hope Elementary School.





Elaine Pratt-4th Grade Teacher

Elaine is excited to be teaching 4th grade at Cross of Hope School. She received her Master of Arts degree from NMHU and is dual certified in Elementary and Special Ed. She enjoys educating her students in all academic areas as well as nurturing their spiritual growth. Elaine enjoys spending time with her husband Jeff and their dog Nadia.



Amy Weig-Pickering—5th Grade Teacher

Originally from New York, I relocated out to New Mexico in the late 1990's. I have a Master's degree in Library Science and worked as a children's librarian for over thirteen years. While working, as a librarian, I was inspired to return to school to pursue my certification in elementary education. I have worked in both public and private school settings. Also, I have experience with various grade levels from kindergarten through eighth grade. I am married and have two children. I am so excited to be working at Cross of Hope Elementary School and look forward to new and exciting adventures.



Richard Hielkema -Elementary School Music Instructor

Richard Hielkema serves as the music director for Cross of Hope Church as well as the music instructor in the elementary school. Richard holds a Bachelor's degree in Music Education, K-12, and a Master's degree in Music Education. Richard enjoys spending time with his family whether it is playing in the backyard or out camping. He and his wife Erin have three children. Other hobbies include playing golf, skiing, and watching most any type of sports that might be on TV.



Judy Sachs - P.E. Instructor

Judy is a native of New Mexico. She has a wonderful husband Jeff, and two boys, Garrett and Jordan, both of whom have attended Cross of Hope Schools since Preschool. Judy is very excited to be the new PE instructor. She believes in keeping one's body and mind in good health and enjoys Yoga, Pilates, and going to the gym. Judy has wonderful support from her family, especially her father-in-law, Jerry Worrall, who volunteers on Fridays to help with PE. Judy and her family attend Sagebrush Community Church.



Nicole Bencomo-Librarian

Nicole has been a member of Cross of Hope since 1988. She is happily married to Victor and has two boys Xander and Corbin. She has worked in the library since 2009, and enjoys reading and hanging out with her family. She is looking forward to a wonderfully well read year.



Amy Saucer, Spanish Instructor

Amy Saucer is Iowa grown and received her degree in Elementary Education and Spanish from Central College in Pella, IA. She was able to study overseas twice in her time at Central spending a semester in Merida, Mexico and a semester in Granda, Spain. Amy has taught 2nd Grade, High School Spanish levels I and II at St. Mary's High School in Colorado Springs, CO and was part of the team to develop the Elementary Spanish program for the Cheyenne Mountain School District #12 in Colorado Springs in 2002-2003 school year. The Saucer family, Amy, her husband, Dan, and their three boys; Alan, Eddie, and Joey moved to Albuquerque in May. She has been home with her three busy boys since summer of 2003 and is muy feliz (very happy) to be joining the staff at Cross of Hope this year!



April Irwin, After School Care Director

April J. Irwin is a native to Albuquerque who has recently graduated from the University of New Mexico with her Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. She has been a Christian for about 3 years and has worked with both the children's ministry and youth group at her church. One of her biggest passions is providing today's youth and children with a positive role model.