

THURSDAY CONNECTION TEACHER BIOS
2009-2010 SCHOOL YEAR

GENE AKERS (Mr. Akers)

6th-12th Blueprint for America

Mr. Akers has owned and operated two companies with multiple locations and supervised more than thirty-five employees. He was responsible for training employees and looks forward to trying to impart the knowledge he has acquired to his students. For the past twenty years he has had a passion for history with an emphasis on the Civil War and World War II. He also enjoys the study of the Middle Ages and American history. He has traveled to many battle sites both in the United States and Europe. What motivates him to teach: "I would like to see the education of our children brought up a notch and I believe I can do that. Our children deserve nothing less." Mr. Akers loves spending time with his grandchildren and telling them stories and reading to them. He says, "I love to watch them grow and develop." Mr. Akers is a self-proclaimed bibliophile. He loves collecting books and has about 4,000 in his library: "Mysteries, history books, books of poetry, and classics are my favorites. I enjoy memorizing favorite poems and often do recitations for civic groups." Mr. Akers also loves to play golf, though he says he's not a good golfer. He enjoys the outdoors and being with friends in nice scenic locations.

TED ANCELET (Mr. Ancelet)

8th-12th Quest

9th-12th The Greater Story

Mr. Ancelet has been involved in student ministry for 12 years. He is currently a seminary student and the student/teaching pastor at Fellowship Bible Church in Knoxville. He is motivated to teach by "the life transformation that comes from people being exposed to the truths of God's Word." He enjoys studying the Bible, reading and spending time with his family. He is also a movie buff, and enjoys puzzles and games.

TRACIE ANCELET (Mrs. Ancelet)

K-2nd A Look Into Literature

K-2nd and 3rd-5th Amusing Math

3rd-5th Mix It, Shake It

7th-12th Becoming

Mrs. Ancelet taught school for 3 years and did a Professional Development Schools (PDS) program in college with one full year student teaching. She has worked with youth for 11 years and been involved in Children's Church for 5 years. She has homeschooled for 3 years and taught at TC for two years. Her areas of special interest include math, literature, Bible study, and social studies for younger kids. Of her motivation for teaching she says, "I really do feel like the Lord has gifted me in teaching children. I enjoy it. I connect with the students and yet they respect me. I enjoy getting ready for my classes and I love to see the light bulb go on while they are learning. Also, I love to see them having fun while learning!" Mrs. Ancelet loves Africa and has a heart for adoption. She and her husband recently adopted a baby from Africa. She says of her husband, "I'm crazy about my husband! He's my best friend. We've done a lot of growing up together . . . We've seen some hard times but God has taught us so much through them. I adore this sweet family he has given me." She is "all about relationships," loves to get to know people (her neighbor calls her "Oprah" meaning Oprah), and loves to hear what makes people tick. She is THRILLED to be a part of TC!

ROBIN F. BEEBE (Mrs. Beebe)

K-3rd and 4th-6th Human Body

3rd-4th and 5th-7th Shurley Grammar

5th-8th Study Skills

Mrs. Beebe has homeschooled her four boys for five years. After taking a break for several years due to personal illness, she has returned with renewed enthusiasm and excitement. She has taught in various homeschool co-ops in NC and TN. She greatly enjoys seeing children learn through a variety of teaching methods, including hands-on activities, music, drama, models, etc. Her work history is predominantly in sales, which integrates into the classroom because teaching children is much like making an effective sales presentation, i.e. teachers must know the material and the audience. One of her main goals is to get children excited about learning. "Witnessing the magic of children learning!" is what motivates Mrs. Beebe to teach. She says, "I love teaching subjects where I can

implement a variety of teaching methods. However, I love any class where I have the privilege of watching kids ‘get-it!’ It may be English, a science topic, or an art project. I love to see children excel in the areas where God has gifted them.” She enjoys using the unit study approach to science and history. She is passionate about writing and communication skills. She loves creating altered art projects using mixed media. Favorite hobbies include scrapbooking, reading, camping, blogging and being outside. She wants TC families to know that “I am a Christian, and worshipping Christ is the goal of my life (2 Cor. 5:9).” She is also “madly in love” with her husband of 14 years. Having been blessed with four sons, she says, “I am learning how to live as the only estrogen producer in the home!” She also says, “I am thankful to have this opportunity to teach your children. We will all enjoy our time together!”

GINGER BETHMANN (Mrs. Bethmann or Miss Ginger for the younger kids)

K-12th Physical Education

K-2nd Beginning Science

1st-3rd Ancient Civilizations

Mrs. Bethmann has a B.S. in Education with a specialization in Health and P.E. for K-12th grades. Before she married, she taught middle school and high school, and coached basketball, and track and field. She teaches because she loves kids and likes to see kids “really understand concepts and have fun.” She is particularly interested in helping homeschooled kids learn social skills, work in groups and have opportunities to play group sports. Mrs. Bethmann has 5 children and taught 4 of them through high school over the past 21 years. Her youngest just graduated from high school last year. She also has 2 daughters-in-law and “3 WONDERFUL & MARVELOUS grandkids – all girls☺ ! She enjoys family, church, laughing, and girlfriends.

CHERYL BLANCHARD (Mrs. Blanchard)

K-2nd and 3rd-5th Canterring the Country

3rd-5th US History/Presidents

5th-8th World Geography

9th-12th Psychology

Mrs. Blanchard has been at TC for five years. She has a Master’s degree in social work and has worked as a family counselor and medical social worker. She taught 5th grade at Crossroads Christian Cooperative and covered maternity leave for the middle school science and health teacher at Christian Family Cooperative. She loves teaching anything related to Social Studies, as well as researching and teaching anything related to health and wellness. She also writes about purity issues for parents and kids. She says, “I think there is so much to learn from the world and the people around us.” She is a lifelong learner, reads all the time, and loves to teach because learning is “so much more than memorizing facts or writing papers. It is gaining understanding, thinking about things in a new way, applying what you learn to your own life, and impacting others by sharing what you have learned. Learning should be exciting. If I can teach in such a way that a student wants to know more, I have created a lifelong learner and that student can change the world.” Mrs. Blanchard is married to David and has three children – Brandon (16), Emily (13 ½), and Lexie (5). All three will attend Crossroads Christian Cooperative next year. Mrs. Blanchard loves to sing and can turn ANYTHING into a song. She especially loves singing the Beatles song, “You Can’t Always Get What You Want” when her children or students complain. She sings in the church choir and on the praise team. She loves boating and camping, and has traveled all over East TN in her popup camper. She says, “I love that homeschooling has allowed my family to see so many beautiful places.”

NATASHA BLUM (Miss Natasha or Mrs. Blum)

K-2nd, 3rd-5th, and 6th-8th Cranium, Clues and Conundrums

Mrs. Blum has been teaching for 16 years. Prior to her 13 years as a homeschool mom/teacher she taught physical education in California. Since then she has taught her two daughters, one of whom is currently a pre-med major at the University of TN. She has also continued her education in Christian Counseling and education. She has taught at TC for the past 6 years as an enrichment-based teacher. She is also in her 3rd year of teaching kindergarten at Christian Family Cooperative School in Knoxville and previously taught K-4 there for three years. She has a love of critical thinking and is also passionate about teaching children to read and write, learn the basic language of mathematics, and explore the world of science and geography. She is motivated to teach by one word: Children. She says, “God has been so gracious to me to put in my heart the desire, love and patience to teach children.” She loves to be around people and to see children get excited about learning and accomplishing a task. Mrs. Blum says, “I believe that the best thing God ever did to me was to give me children. I am forever grateful.”

BECKY BOWMAN (Mrs. Bowman or Miss Becky)

5th-8th Digital Storytelling

7th-12th Adobe Photoshop

7th-12th Computers 101

9th-12th ACT Prep

Mrs. Bowman is currently certified to teach grades 1-8, high school science and special education with a specialization in academically gifted students. She has taught in the public school system at all levels and also at the community college level. She is also an instructor for the American Red Cross, preparing volunteers to work on national disasters. Very simply put, she loves to learn. Some of her many interests include: forensic science, Adobe Photoshop, world geography and current events, oceanography, economics, psychology . . . and giving students the opportunity to expand their creativity. She says, "To me teaching is as natural as breathing. I teach regardless of where I am and try to share my enthusiasm for learning. The students at Thursday Connection are so much fun to teach. Each week I'm fortunate to come to a place where I truly love the kids and look forward to being a part of their lives. When I go home, I've been rejuvenated and usually have lots of interesting stories to share with my family." Mrs. Bowman finds traveling to be a special joy and makes every trip an adventure. She is a singer, and used to sing background on records and make commercials for the radio and TV. She went to Brazil a few years ago as a member of Second Touch, a Christian contemporary ensemble. Photography and photo editing are her passions. She is a disaster photographer for the American Red Cross but, she says, "much of my free time is spent photographing my gorgeous baby grandson!"

LORELEI BRYAN (Mrs. Bryan)

9th-12th (girls) Creative Living 2

Mrs. Bryan homeschooled her own six children from pre-school through seventh grade. She taught in an international school run by Wycliffe Bible Translators while living in Indonesia. Stateside she has taught high school and adult education. She graduated from Moody Bible Institute with a major in Foreign Missions and a minor in Christian Education. She views teaching at TC as a ministry: "It's the way I give back a small portion of what the Lord has generously given me. However, I receive so much more than I give. The students give me the invaluable gifts of friendship, life from a youthful perspective, and stimulation to stretch and study. I'm so grateful to God for this privilege of walking His pathway with the students of Thursday Connection!" Mrs. Bryan has a special interest in photography which "fills an artistic need in me." She describes it as her outlet, her constant impetus for growth as well as her entertainment, means of establishing relationships, and her business. In between photography businesses she went back to school for interior design and owned an interior design consulting business. She says, "I love to read and learn new things. May it ever be so!" Mrs. Bryan and her husband have six grown children aged 22 to 35 and eight grandchildren aged 2 to 17. They moved to a rural area outside Knoxville in 2006 and live on four scenic acres in the foothills of the Smokies.

MARILYN CORWIN (Mrs. Corwin)

9th-12th Geometry

Mrs. Corwin has worked with children for decades and homeschooled her children for 15 years. She has a Master's degree in Mathematics and taught a computer science course for juniors and seniors at the University of Texas at Dallas. She has also taught 4-year-old kindergarten. She is motivated by her love of students and her love of teaching, geometry in particular. She enjoys helping students learn. She says, "Although I earned a Master's degree in Mathematics, I don't have all the answers. I will work hard to do all I can to help my students learn. I expect my students to do all they can to learn."

LAURA CROFT (Ms. Laura or Ms. Croft)

K-3rd Ice is Nice

3rd-5th and 6th-8th Narnia

Ms. Croft has taught her son at home for seven years and worked at TC as a substitute teacher. She is the part-time Director of Children's Ministries at St. Mark UMC, where she has taught Financial Peace to both adults and youth. She has also taught Sunday School, Vacation Bible School and Children's Church for seven years. She enjoys the research and planning that is involved in teaching and says that "to be able to be with young people and possibly motivate them to learn is honestly a dream job for me!" Ms. Croft has an AS degree in Respiratory Therapy and has worked as a Registered Respiratory Therapist for eleven years. She lives in Clinton with her husband Joe, and dog Minnie. Nathan graduated in 2008 and attends Lee University majoring in Political Science/Pre-Law.

CYNTHIA DENTON (Mrs. Denton or Mrs. D.)

6th-8th Dissection Enthusiast
6th-8th Mad Chemistry

Before adopting her daughter (Genavieve, now 3), Mrs. Denton was a full time middle school science teacher at a Christian school in California. She taught for five years, coached swim for three years and “loved every minute of it!” She is particularly interested in the life sciences. She says, “I am fascinated by God’s creation of life in all aspects – the intricacies of His Design in all creatures, and how we all interact together. I believe as a teacher I have a unique opportunity and honor of speaking into young people’s lives at this critical stage; just as others spoke into mine. I also believe that teaching is what the LORD has called me to do.” Mrs. Denton met her husband in the teachers’ lounge at her last school. They have two beautiful children, Genavieve (3) and Jonas (2). Mrs. Denton really likes to sing “off key and loud.” She says, “Hey, the Lord said to make a ‘joyful noise.’ He didn’t specify on the quality!”

PENNY HARRIS (Mrs. Harris)

K-2nd Ready, Set, Read
3rd-5th Just Read It!

Mrs. Harris taught pre-school and primary grades in public and private schools for 8 years. After leaving teaching and becoming a mom, she began to home school her children. She has been a home-schooling mom for the last 7 years. Her motivation to teach has been her own family: “When my boys were diagnosed with dyslexia, it really made me look at teaching in a different way. I have really been challenged to help my boys have success in reading. I have gone beyond my usual teaching methods, to find ways to teach them and others how to read. It has been a very rewarding experience!” The Harrises are foster parents and have had many “heart changing experiences” through foster parenting.

LISA HASKELL (Mrs. Haskell)

K-3rd and 3rd-6th Hands On Science
K-3rd and 3rd-6th Critters, Critters
K-3rd and 3rd-6th You Wouldn’t Want to be at the Boston Tea Party
3rd-7th Botany for Kids

Mrs. Haskell taught for Knox County Schools, Alcoa Schools and Berean Christian Schools before starting homeschooling. She says, “I think I have been teaching all my life!” She has a B.S. in Elementary Education (grades 1-8) and a Master’s degree in Curriculum and Instruction. Mrs. Haskell’s passion is teaching: “I feel blessed that I get to do what God gave me a passion for. I love teaching anything!” Her favorite subject to teach right now is history. Mrs. Haskell often chooses her classes based on her own children’s needs. She goes “all out” creatively at TC, something she doesn’t necessarily do at home. She is motivated “by the challenge to teach in a way that kids learn, and to make the ‘hard’ or ‘boring’ stuff easier and fun! I never had teachers teach me that way. Sad . . . but true! I never thought I was ‘smart’ at school. I think that’s why I became a teacher. I knew there was a way to teach where anyone could ‘get’ it.” Three things you probably don’t know about Mrs. Haskell: 1) She graduated with a specialty in German. (“Go figure!”) 2) She almost majored in psychology, but all the science scared her off! If she had to do something else besides teach, she’d want to be a Christian counselor. 3) The things she dislikes most: mopping, ironing . . . and broccoli!

DOUGLAS KIMBALL (Mr. Kimball)

6th-8th and 9th-12th Drawing

Mr. Kimball has a BFA from Ball State University and an MFA from Syracuse University, where he taught 2 assistantships in illustration. In addition, he has been a freelance commercial/fine artist for 28 years. He has been involved in children and youth ministry for 12 years and is a homeschooling parent. He is motivated to teach by his desire to share his knowledge and experience in fine arts (drawing, painting, sculpture and photography) with TC students. Mr. Kimball enjoys outdoor activities such as walking, camping, hiking, biking and horseback riding. He also enjoys good music, good food and good friends. Mr. Kimball wants us to know: “I love Jesus and I love my family.”

JENI LAMM WEBER (Ms. Lamm)

7th-12th Acting

7th-12th So You Think You Have Talent (co-teaching with Kim Leake)

Ms. Lamm has a B.A. in drama and an M.E. She has been a resource teacher and a substitute teacher in the public schools. She has taught a number of acting classes and workshops over the years. Her areas of special interest are acting (of course!), singing, and cats. She says, "I enjoy acting so much and have as much fun as the kids in teaching it. Acting exercises are very beneficial to young people regardless of whether or not they decide to pursue acting as a career. I enjoy the challenge and variety of teaching acting. Also, it is very rewarding to see students expand their imaginations and improve their use of voice and movement to communicate." Ms. Lamm is the Managing Director of The WordPlayers, a company of Christian theatre artists. Her husband is a professor in the theatre department at UT. They have 3 boys (ages 18, 16 and 14) – "So come on boys, sign up!"

SUZETTE LAPORTE-AYO (Ms. Suzette or Suzette or Senora)

Spanish I and II for all ages

Ms. Suzette has been teaching children for over eighteen years. Her first teaching experience was teaching French to 8th graders right after she took her first set of French classes in high school. "After that," she says, "I was hooked and kept doing it each summer." While working on a Chemical Engineering degree at the University of Arizona, she tutored students in Spanish, as well as other subjects, at a center for students with learning disabilities. After receiving her B.S., she worked for a company which implemented an extracurricular language program in public schools. With this company she started teaching mixed age children's groups. She then worked at a tutoring center in both tutoring and business capacities. She then started her own Spanish venture, and learned new techniques, methods and ideas which she has incorporated in the programs she has designed and used for the past 10 years. She says, "It has truly been very fulfilling to see my students benefit from these classes." Ms. Suzette wants to share her native language and the Hispanic culture with her students because she believes that "teaching and showing students about other cultures and peoples is what makes us more open-minded individuals and ultimately results in more accepting and forgiving adults." She uses a variety of media in her "total immersion" classes, including games, songs, music, reading and listening to books and conversations, as well as videos, podcasts, and internet sites for specific areas of study. She is motivated by "human interaction . . . Every time a student becomes excited about learning something in my class, I get very excited and it in turn usually gets the other students excited and we end up having a very successful lesson. I am also always up for a challenge. It is very motivating to see a student who was not interested or who was having a difficult time have the light bulb go on." Ms. Suzette wants her students to know that although she likes an orderly class and sets some ground rules, she is also flexible is there is ever a problem and, most importantly, she likes for she and her students to have FUN!

KIM LEAKE

K-3rd Boomwhackers

2nd-6th Performing Arts

7th-12th So You Think You Have Talent (co-teaching with Jeni Lamm)

Private Piano and Piano Keyboarding lessons

Kim Leake has taught various music and performing arts classes for TC since its inception. She has over 25 years of experience in piano instruction and is currently employed by the Tennessee Conservatory of Fine Arts as piano instructor and office manager. During her earlier years she traveled with the southern gospel group, The Harmony Boys, as lead accompanist. In connection with Tin Soldier Productions, she was the Musical Director for "Anne of Green Gables," performed at Pellissippi Performing Arts Center. She is a board member of Ballet Gloria and volunteers on a regular basis, providing piano instruction, to the children at Wesley House in Knoxville. Playing keyboard for the praise team at her church, Seymour United Methodist, is one of her more enjoyable activities. She attended the University of Tennessee before starting her family. She is married with two children, ages 14 and 21.

MARGARET MANNESCHMIDT (Mrs. Margaret)

4th-7th Cooking (boys and girls separate classes)

Mrs. Manneschmidt has home-educated different combinations of her 6 children continuously over the past 16 years. She has taught in TC for 3 years, including Home Ec for high schoolers and Kids Cooking. Prior to teaching at TC, she worked in the TC nursery for several years and has substituted in a variety of classes. She says she had a really hard time selecting a college major because she was interested in just about everything! She got a nursing degree, but spent the summer between her last two years of college doing archaeology in Israel. She has a minor in religious studies. If she had it all to do over again, she might major in nutrition. She says,

“Because I like to keep learning and researching and seeing interconnectedness in many disciplines, teaching is a good way to use my gifts for the body of Christ. I also like to encourage people to wholeheartedly pursue the areas in which they are gifted.” Mrs. Manneschmidt grew up in a town with a population of only 1800 (Tracy City, TN). She is the oldest of two children, her only sibling being mentally retarded. She enjoys camping, hiking, crafts, reading, seeing new places, art, and meeting people. She calls herself an “introverted extrovert – a people person who likes her alone time.”

MARGARET E. MIGAS (Mrs. Migas, Miss Margaret)

K-3rd and 4th-6th Art

Mrs. Migas has been an art teacher for nearly 40 years. She graduated from Minot State Teachers College with a major in Art and minor in Art History. She has always been interested in languages and has learned Latin, Russian, French and Spanish. She continued her Art education at Renton Liberal Arts College and Green River College in Seattle, extension art classes in Portland, oil and acrylic painting in Los Angeles. After traveling to Mexico, Central and South American for a year, she returned to back home to Seattle to continue her painting career. She married, had three sons and moved to California, where she opened at art school and also taught her K-6 art program at Mission Estancia Elementary School. She continued her art education in pen and ink and other media with famous artists, as well as colored pencils and pastels. After moving to Knoxville, she set up her Art Program and taught at Sequoyah Elementary School. Her program is still being taught today and has been sold to other schools in our area as well as nationwide. She has taught homeschooled students at Grassy Valley Church, Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church and a Baptist church. She has been teaching at TC for 10 years. She continues her extension classes in clay, watercolor, soft pastels, etc. She also teaches in her home studio year round for both children and adults. Her special interests include painting (watercolor, oil and acrylic), drawing, art history, ceramics (she has always had her own kiln), and “every other media possible in the art world.” In addition to art, she enjoys eating healthy and exercising, including sports such as tennis, squash and curling. She says, “I love to teach children, actually 5-90 year olds, which is an equal passion along with my passion for art. I believe that to give a student self-confidence is important to the well being of that student and will carry over to all school classes. Art is using a person’s right brain, where math uses the left brain. One needs to develop both sides which lends itself to creativity in the left brain subjects. I need to share my gift with others; art is something that transcends all subjects. Art is a desire not a gift. Only 10% of our population is gifted, the other 90% learn it and anyone can learn art. I believe it is important for all people to have an art education.”

JODIE MOORE (Mrs. Moore)

3rd-5th and 5th-8th Geometry Fun

5th-8th General Science

9th-12th Biology

9th-12th Physics

9th-12th Sciencewise

After graduating from the University of Toledo, Mrs. Moore subbed in the Toledo school system for one year and then began teaching full-time in a 6th grade inner city classroom. After 5 years in that position, she was approached by the principal of the school at her church about teaching in their high school program. She began in the church school teaching all subjects using the ACE system and led the school through the transition to a typical high school program. She then became the math and science department teacher for 6 years. After her husband was transferred to Tennessee, she began homeschooling and has taught in the co-op setting and been a private tutor for the past 13 years. She says, “I am a born again, spirit-filled Christian attending Alcoa Maryville Church of God. I love teaching and believe it to be God’s calling on my life.” Mrs. Moore is wife to Marty for 26 years and mother of three: Tricia (23), Marty (20) and CJ (8). She has two grandchildren, John (5) and Hunter, born December 2007. She is actively involved in the Boy Scouts of America and leads a Cub scout pack and a Venturing Crew while her husband leads a Boy Scout troop in Maryville.

BRANDI MURRAY (Brandi or Mrs. Murray)

9th-12th Chemistry

Mrs. Murray started teaching as a grad student at UT while getting a Master’s degree in Chemistry. She then taught General Chemistry and Analytical Chemistry at Pellissippi State for 6 years. She has been with TC since 2005 and has taught chemistry, physical science and mechanical machines. She says, “I am mostly science minded, but I love literature and languages as well. I try to make chemistry class fun but challenging enough to prepare them for college, and I treat physical science as a gateway to high school science work. I love to see the light bulb come on for a student when they truly understand something. Chemistry has a bad reputation for being a terrible class that is too hard, but I try to make it less scary. I love to see students learning and applying things we do to their lives. I make myself approachable to students. I do not like the idea of them being intimidated by me. If they don’t

feel comfortable asking questions, how will they ever learn?" Mrs. Murray gives LOTS of fun (but educational) extra credit opportunities in her high school classes in order to help with grades and offer additional challenges to the students to help them learn.

DEBBIE OYLER (Ms. Debbie or Mrs. Oyler)

3rd-4th Literature/Creative Writing A

5th-6th Literature/Creative Writing B

7th-8th Literature/Creative Writing C

7th-8th Composition I

Mrs. Oyler has her teaching certification in Early Childhood Special Education, Special Education K-12, and Elementary Education K-7. She has experience in teaching Special Education, Preschool Handicapped, and Elementary grades 2 and 3. She has been homeschooling at least part-time for 3 of her 4 children and has taught at TC for 6 years. Of her motivation for teaching she says, "I am very passionate about encouraging students to enjoy reading a wide variety of books to widen their horizons as well as to prepare them for the future. Through the experience of reading good literature, I enjoy teaching the craft of creative writing. My experience in education was not one that really encouraged self motivation in learning, and I desire to help students that I encounter to experience the pleasure learning brings." Mrs. Oyler loves being a wife and mother of four children, as well as being part of two great extended families. Reading and listening to many kinds of music are favorite activities if time allows. Her family loves to camp and travel. She has lived in many places as a child and as an adult and says, "that has opened many doors for me." She and her husband, Bruce, have had the opportunity to travel to Italy and later to the Eastern Mediterranean – they hope to see many more places in the world. Service to God and her church is a great part of Mrs. Oyler's life through several avenues, including Stephen's Ministry, a new care giving mission in her congregation. Her family's involvement in foster care and adoption has been a blessing and a calling from God.

BLAIR PRINCE (Mrs. Prince)

4th-8th Nutritional Health

As the daughter of a diabetic doctor, Mrs. Prince was raised to have a special interest in the nutritional value of food. She says, "I am so thankful to have been given a foundational understanding of nutrition, because with it I was equipped with the motivation and knowledge I've needed to be able to make good food choices easily. I am excited to now have the chance to pass this on to others." She enjoys looking for new, creative ways to make things better and says that, for her, "tweaking menus and recipes nutritionally is just another fun challenge." Mrs. Prince has enjoyed homeschooling her own children for 13 years, and teaching at Thursday Connection for two years. She loves flowers, canoeing, photography, crafts, cooking and party planning. But, she says, "Probably the most important thing you should know about me is this . . . Jesus is the most wonderful part of my life!"

MICHELLE ROSENBAUM (Mrs. Rosenbaum)

8th-9th Pre-algebra

9th-10th Algebra I

10th-12th Algebra II

Mrs. Rosenbaum has a B.S. in Mathematics and Computer Science from Dallas Baptist University. She worked on a Master's in Mathematics until the birth of her first child. She has tutored students in Advanced Math, worked as a graduate assistant, taught Calculus lab class for business majors, and worked in a math tutoring lab answering questions from any math subject. She began teaching Algebra II in cooperatives 5 years ago. She started teaching Pre-Algebra and Algebra I four years ago. For Mrs. Rosenbaum, "God is the most important thing in my life and I am blessed to know Him. He is my source of strength and courage." She is happily married and has 5 children ranging in age from 8-19 years of age. She has been homeschooling her own children for 13 years. Of her motivation for teaching, she says, "I want to help people learn that they can work abstract math problems. I like to help teach the good ones tricks to get the answer faster. I like to help those who are 'fearful' or reluctant to overcome their fear of math. I want to break the cycle and help them realize that they can work algebra." Mrs. Rosenbaum enjoys camping, horseback riding, bicycling and swimming. She and her husband have been running camps for 21 years. She particularly enjoys helping people conquer their fears – whether it be a fear of heights, water, horses . . . or math. She says, "Many very good climbers are actually afraid of heights. Two things keep them going back for more: 1) the adrenalin rush and 2) the sense of achievement after accomplishing something which pushed them to their limits." Be it math or climbing, she says, "I believe [everyone] can learn to unlock the rules and learn to work through it taking one step at a time." Her goal in teaching children is to help them "master" the subject matter so that each student thoroughly understands the material and does not feel lost as the class progresses on to more complicated problems. She realizes that "some children must work at it more than others, but as we work hard to achieve that which challenges us, we not only develop perseverance but also self confidence."

MAUREEN SCHENK (Mrs. Schenk)

8th-9th Composition II
9th-12th American History
9th-12th High School English A
11th-12th High School English B
11th-12th American Literature
11th-12th Advanced English

Maureen Schenk is certified to teach grades 7-12. She taught for 2 years in California, 4 years at Bearden Middle School, and for 10 years as a part-time instructor in the Pellissippi adult literacy program. Her special interests include English, Government, History and Literature. What motivates her to teach? "Craziness or God."

DANA SHERRELL (Mrs. Sherrell)

3rd-5th and 6th-8th Super Sleuth
3rd-5th and 6th-8th Survival Quest

Mrs. Sherrell has taught in the Sevier County School System, as well as in Mississippi. She is certified to teach K-12 with a specialization in Family and Consumer Sciences. In July 2009, she will have completed her Master's in Elementary Education. She has been homeschooling for the past five years. She has three daughters – Danielle (16), Katie (15), and Madison (9). Favorite hobbies include cooking, reading and spending time with her family. She and her family are very involved in their church, The Gathering, where she serves as drama director. Mrs. Sherrell has a wide range of interests and loves to incorporate creative learning opportunities into her classes whenever possible. Her passion is to help students discover and use their God-given talents and to instill in them a lifelong joy of learning. "I'm very excited about having the opportunity to teach at Thursday Connection. The anticipation and the privilege of working with wonderful young people in a supportive Christian environment is one for which I am very grateful."

MISTY SHUPE (Mrs. Shupe)

6th-8th America's Wars
6th-8th Mystery of History
6th-8th Native Americans

Mrs. Shupe has a B.A. in History and a Minor in Education from the University of Tennessee. She is a home-schooling mom of 2 boys. She has also taught extensively in her church with various age groups. She is very interested in history, especially U.S. History, and loves to follow the political process. She teaches because, "I love children and feel that I can benefit other home-schooling families in their endeavor to educate their children." Her hobbies include sewing, gardening, reading, baking – especially homemade breads, and UT sports.

JOAN SMITH (Mrs. Smith)

9th-12th Photography

Mrs. Smith has been a professional photographer for 17 years. She has also taught at home for 11 years and in a classroom setting for 5 years. She says, "I love the academic environment, and I love to see a student's excitement about what they are learning." Mrs. Smith has been married for 24 years and has three children. She loves animals and reading.

TODD SPEIDELL, PH.D. (Dr. Speidell or "Doc")

K-12th Mind Games I and II

Dr. Todd Speidell is a published author and editor, as well as a full-time homeschooling dad of a teenage daughter. He taught for 17 years at Webb School and at Knoxville College for one year. His diverse areas of interest include Theology, Ethics, Philosophy, World Religions, Strategy Games, and Guitar & Music Theory. He is motivated to teach by his enjoyment of students and their learning. Dr. Speidell is an avid chess and Jumble (like Scrabble) player.

MERYL VAN DER MERWE (Meryl)

5th-8th Wonderful World of Trade

7th-12th Mind Your Own Business

7th-12th Programming

9th-12th Speech

Meryl has tutored ever since she was a high school student. As a college student she and her now-husband started the first-ever summer computer camps for kids in South Africa. She has also taught in Vacation Bible Schools and Sunday Schools since she was a teenager. She has coached various academic teams for Cedar Springs Homeschool Group and has taught at TC for 3 years. She has taught her own children for the past 6 years. She is motivated by a desire to “inspire my students to achieve beyond what they think they are capable of achieving.” Meryl is originally from South Africa. She was born in England and lived there for a short time while her father was studying for his PhD. Her husband was born in Zimbabwe (at that time Rhodesia). She majored in English and German at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in South Africa, then worked for years as a computer programmer before moving on to run her own software business. She also managed a children’s clothing store and had a small business that made homemade muesli which they sold to guesthouses and at craft fairs. Her family moved here in 2003. Meryl loves reading – “classic literature and fantasy are my favorites”; traveling around the world, especially to places off the beaten track; and chocolate – “I am a chocoholic, but only for non-American chocolate as the chocolate here tastes so different to what I grew up with!”

JOAN WHITESIDE (Mrs. Whiteside or Miss Joan for younger kids)

7th-12th Music Theory and Appreciation

Private Flute Lessons

Mrs. Whiteside has a Bachelor of Music and Master of Music in Flute Performance with minors in Music Theory from UTK. She was awarded a Graduate Assistantship for the Master’s Program and fulfilled it by teaching the UTK secondary and elective flute students there. After her 2-year assistantship, they asked her to stay on to teach the same for two more years while they searched for a suitable grad assistant to take her place. During this time, she married and soon began having children. She continued to teach private flute students in her home and also taught flute majors at Maryville College for 2 years. The time away from homeschooling her children became an issue, so she resigned from the Maryville College position and kept only her home studio. With her children now grown, she accepted a position a year ago at Pellissippi State to teach flute majors and minors. She says, “I really enjoy music and love to see kids become musically literate, both in reading and writing music and also playing an instrument. I also love to introduce kids to music from all periods and see them fall in love with it, thus becoming educated music appreciators.” She continues to play in area orchestras, ensembles and solo positions per diem for various programs, churches, parties, weddings, etc. She especially loves when her whole family gets to perform together. Having met her husband in the Music Department at UTK she says, they “forced” their kids to be musicians, providing piano, voice and violin lessons for them. As a result, her oldest two daughters majored in music in college and her son continues to play area jobs – “it is fun to have that in common in our family.” Mrs. Whiteside is the Missions assistant at Fellowship Church, a position which keeps her busy 3 days per week. It also gives her the opportunity to go on missions trips to participate in ministry, service and missionary care.