



Chris Vitt – Hiawatha, KS

“As a teacher, I want our graduates to be good citizens who will contribute to their communities and who will have happy and fulfilling lives” is Mr. Vitts’ stated educational goal. His teaching philosophy is to “make science curriculums interesting and applicable to daily life.” He believes students must see “how scientific methods and fact-based information can help them make informed decisions”.

Mr. Vitt was an Honor Student at School prior to earning his Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from Emporia State University in 1984. His undergraduate work was recognized with earning his degree with a Magna Cum Laude honor. He furthered his degree work by earning a Master of Science in Biology Education from ESU in 1991. Along with these preparations for his career he also participated in professional organizations that allowed him to develop ideas for use in his classroom and field experiences. One of his most popular experiences was participating in STREAMLINK water-quality program developed by the University of Kansas. This program led him to marine biology field trips to the Bahamas where he was exposed to another culture and a much different educational system. These trips provided professional growth and “invaluable life-enriching experiences for all who made the journeys!”

He began his more than 35-year career in education at Hiawatha High School in 1984. He taught courses in General Biology, Human Anatomy and Physiology, College Biology and Marine Biology. He retired for the first time in May of 2016. He continued teaching all science subjects at Axtell High School in 2017, then on to Nemaha Central High School, in Seneca, KS and every other day at Hiawatha High School in 2017-18. Finally, two more years at Hiawatha High School until 2020 where he retired for the second time due to stage 4 glioblastoma multiforme.

The awards, honors, and recognitions have been many during his teaching career. He was selected as USD 415 “teacher of the year” in 1996 and 2016 as well as 1996 Wal-Mart “teacher of the year”. He was the 2002-03 Pony Express Uniserve District “outstanding educator” and received the 2015 District “Leadership Award”. He also has been recognized in the community by Directing the Hiawatha Community recycling Program for over 25 years and serving on the St. Ann’s Catholic Church Pastoral Council for 9 years. He also helped establish and manage a ten-acre wildlife habitat located behind Hiawatha High School. It’s two-mile-long walking trail is open to the community.

Julie Rosa writes, “A mentor, by definition, is an individual that leads, guides, counsels, corrects, and encourages, those younger or less experienced in skills and character in order to pass along desired traits. To succeed as a mentor, one must first have these skills in abundance and then have the desire and time to form relationships to pass them on.” She says that for 32 years, hundreds of Hiawatha High School Students have benefitted from the mentorship of Chris Vitt. These reasons are why we are fortunate to have him in the Class of 2021 at the Teachers’ Hall of Fame