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Damara Burnett - Susan B. English Teacher *by Charity Winters*



Damara Burnett is another local Seldovian who has signed on to teach this year at Susan B. English. A somewhat recent resident of the last four years, Damara has had several positions at our school in the past. Her first year here in the winter of 2003-2004, she finished out the school year as a substitute for Missy McMillian. After that she worked off and on as a substitute and coached last year's girls' high school basketball team. This year we are happy to have her as the half time high school Language Arts teacher.

Originally from Michigan, Damara attended college in Minnesota where she met her future husband, Andy Lorentz. Damara worked in the Alaskan bush for several summers during school and Andy would often come up to visit. They intended to move to Alaska once they were out of college and in 2001 they ended up in Homer.

As for school this year, Damara says she is glad to be there. For one, she is happy to be using her degree in English Education and is also relieved that the position is only half time, making for a much less stressful job. As any teacher at Susan B. English knows, teaching full time is no picnic! This semester she is teaching Multicultural Alaskan and World Literature, which Damara says has been fun to teach as it takes a broad view of several aspects of literature. Damara mentioned that she feels "comfortable" in her position this year. Familiar with the students and staff, it has been easy for her to slip into her role and she has enjoyed working with both. She is most excited about watching her students become better writers as the year progresses – a change that she is already beginning to see this year.

From there, Seldovia was simply the next step, coming across it on one of their numerous hiking and camping trips. They decided Seldovia would be their home and moved over in 2003. Almost immediately after they bought a 3-acre lot on Mine Loop Road overlooking the Barabara Creek gorge. A steep little path leads down the hill to the first building where Damara and Andy lived until Andy was able to build their home: a chicken coop. Fortunately, the chicken coop now holds 19 chickens and Damara and Andy live in a quaint little cabin they built themselves. They were able to move in shortly after their wedding date on September 3, 2005. Now Andy has already begun working on an addition. And as for most people who build homes, especially in Seldovia, Damara stated the project was “on-going”.



Andy Lorentz

After her positive experience as the girls’ basketball coach last year, Damara is hoping to continue on in the position this year, claiming that the job was fun and rewarding. But besides her heavy involvement at the school, Damara has also been involved within the community of Seldovia in other ways. At this time she and Andy volunteer for the fire department – Damara is the bookkeeper for the organization. She has also worked for the Tide Pool Café and the Seldovia Gazette in the past. In the meantime, Seldovia is the perfect place for her to enjoy some of her favorites: kayaking, biking, and hiking. This summer she took a month long kayak/canoe trip in the Beaver Creek area and last year she participated in a triathlon in Anchorage. In the future, Damara hopes to pursue a Master’s degree in creative writing. But for now she says, “I’m just happy to be here and happy that Seldovia is my home!”