

For Immediate Release

November 21, 2018

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Media Release

A Match Made at School – Couple falls in Love Over Education

Charleston, SC – Colleen Knauer found South Carolina after she and a sorority sister picked a random place on the map. They were planning their big move after graduating from the University of Rhode Island.

Colleen came down to North Charleston High School for an interview, and then Principal David Caldwell catapulted her career with Charleston County School District. He offered her a job on the spot and she canceled other interviews she had lined up across the state.

That summer, as she was setting up her classroom, a male coworker poked his head in her classroom and asked her if she was going to use her podium. She barely gave him a second glance and told him she was not. Ray Knauer took the podium, and that's the last they saw of each other for the next few months.

Little did the pair know that the students were playing matchmaker behind the scenes. The students solicited the help of an English teacher to make a connection.

"The teacher emailed me to see if I was single, and I'm thinking, 'she shouldn't be asking me these questions,'" said Ray. "She eventually invited me to go out with a group of other teachers to the Homecoming game, and she reintroduced me to Colleen. We've been together since that night. We went on a date the next night, and that was it."

In honor of National Family Week, which is November 18–24, 2018 we celebrate their story and other CCSD families like them.

Their story

Colleen was just 22, and with no family in the area, her North Charleston High School co-workers and students were her family. That family not only

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set Colleen and her husband Ray up, but they have been there through their engagement, wedding, and the birth of their three children.

Colleen was teaching English and went on to receive her Masters in Mathematical Education. Her goal in life was to receive her Doctorate by the age of 30 to teach at the college level. While studying for her Doctorate, her supervisor pulled her out of the classroom to serve as an Instructional Coach.

At the end of the year, he came to her and asked her to serve as Interim Assistant Principal. In the meantime, Ray had been named Athletic Director.

Life was trudging along as normal when the principal left to pursue other opportunities. Colleen could not be named principal at North Charleston High School but did become the principal at Northwoods Middle School in February 2017.

"It was bittersweet because I felt like I grew up at North Charleston High School," explained Colleen. "I never wanted to be a principal, but I think everything happens for a reason."

Ray and Colleen always knew they would teach in public schools. Both wanted to make an impact that would be felt. In the Title I urban setting, they found their calling.

Their children Brayden (7) attends North Charleston Creative Arts; Landon (3) attends Malcom C. Hersey Elementary School, and Brooklyn (7-months-old) will attend North Charleston schools as well.

"I hope we're making a difference. I know as a team we made an impact at North Charleston High School," said Colleen. "Most people don't get to influence others. As an educator I get to influence hundreds each year. I take that very seriously."

Ray said he and his wife understand each other's struggles because of working in the same school.

"You can't be there for the job," said Ray. You have to be there because you want to be there. Some of these kids come from tough lives, but when they love - they love hard. If you prove your loyalty to them and show them you are there for their education and bettering their lives, they will go to the end of the world for you. They have an amazing ability to figure out who's there for the right reason."

Ray said as an educator one must be all in or all out. He said his parents were strict about his schooling.

"I decided I wanted to give that to other people and help people the way education helped me get out of a tough area," said Ray. "We lived in a rough

neighborhood very much like where I teach. I wanted to change their lives the way education changed mine.

"My favorite thing about North Charleston High School is the kids; that's who I am there for," Ray said. "I have much love for my boss (Principal Henry Darby). But I am not there for him. I am a servant of the children. If I just teach them social studies, I fail. I am there to teach them about life and mentor them."

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools that span 1,000 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 86 schools and several specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities led by associate superintendents. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.