

# A Passion For Teaching

By CHIPS ROSS

Teaching has been a passion for FRCS 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher, Mallory Lyons, even while a student. It began in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, as her teacher, Rhonda Royal, allowed her to help out in the classroom during recess and after school. Looking back, Mallory is not sure how much of a help she actually was, but she quickly learned “she made me want to teach. I wanted to be like her.”

At 16, Mallory filled the dual role of teacher and student. Rhonda Royal played another helping hand, landing her a job with the before and after school and summer school programs. Later, while attending UC Santa Barbara, Mallory continued to teach on the side, tutoring in local schools. She loves teaching because it is helping people; “it’s neat to see [the students] grow and learn.”

Mallory came to Forest Ranch Charter School after a year of teaching in Corning. Her boyfriend, Chris Bodney, introduced her to Forest Ranch, showing the area in which he grew up. The school quickly caught her attention in the community. Soon after, Mallory found a job posting for teachers at the new FRCS. Prior to applying for the teaching position, she attended the very first Mountain Music Festival to check the school out. Growing up near the beaches of San Diego, Forest Ranch is a big change for Mallory, but a change that she loves. “I love the trees. It has a slower pace and people seem so happy and positive.”

As the first and second grade teacher, Mallory has the joy of teaching her students to read. Some of her students set goals at the start of the year to grow in reading; Mallory proudly relates that some of them now are moving on to better literature, reading from chapter books. Even though a full time teacher now, she still finds herself a student as well. As she teaches her class about Ancient Egypt, she’s also learning. “I get to learn with them. They are excited because I’m excited.”

For Mallory, one of the benefits of teaching at FRCS is the tremendous “...freedom to be creative with curriculum. [This] makes teaching more meaningful.” She loves the challenge that comes with each day, seeking to make her classroom and school “a place where kids can be the best they can be.” Mallory is very grateful for the parent involvement in the classroom at FRCS. Their participation helps the kids learn, since “the kids love to see their parents here.” Plus, the parents are “so helpful; they’re always so flexible and generous.”

In addition to her classroom, Mallory teaches electives on sewing and newspaper. She will soon start a business group elective, taking the students through the process of raising money for the Spring Musical to be given to a local charity. Mallory is also involved in the Parent Teacher Partnership and heads up the Mentoring Program, where younger and older students are paired together.

When not teaching, Mallory enjoys hiking, riding, playing with her dog, Lenny, and cooking, “my favorite thing to do.” Ever the student, she’s also been learning how to snowboard.