

An Interview with Christy Flinchum

Christina Thames

Aspiring high school biology teacher Christy Flinchum is a native of southern California, but she has been a resident of the East Coast for a decade. After attending Germanna Community College in Fredericksburg, VA, she transferred into the College of William & Mary's undergraduate program and graduated in May 2013.

Christy was sure when she started college that she wanted to be a history teacher, but a required biology class – which she admits, “I was angry about having to take” – led her to a love of the scientific examination of living things. Christy capped her undergraduate studies with an internship in yeast genetics, and she ultimately decided to change her education lens from high school history to high school science.

“I’ve always known that I was going to be a teacher, I just didn’t know how,” Christy says. As a high school student herself, Christy received As and Cs; her ADHD made it difficult for her to pay attention and relate to things that she found uninteresting. Now as a teacher, Christy wants to help provide more opportunities for students to gain knowledge in the practical applications of biology and chemistry to better understand and appreciate how these sciences impact their lives. She hopes to inspire in others a love for the potential of science.

While she seeks to motivate her students, Christy never forgets her own source of motivation: her eight-year-old son Kieran. Together, the pair enjoys going to museums, watching movies, and playing cards. Kieran also loves to fish, so they have spent time out at College Creek with biology professor Stan Hoegerman. This is one of the reasons why Christy says she loves William & Mary. “You meet professors and make great connections,” she says. “That would not happen at a big school.”

Christy and Kieran traveled to Disney World in December during the winter semester break. It was the fulfillment of a promise. “When I graduated [undergrad], we would go to Disney. That was the deal,” she says. “It took us a while to make it work, but we made it happen.” Although the pair avoided



the roller coasters since they are both “scaredycats,” Kieran especially loved Big Thunder Mountain.

When she is not in class, in her high school practicum placement, or spending time with Kieran, Christy also enjoys cooking, cross stitching, and writing short stories. In the future, she would love to travel “everywhere.” She would like to start with London – a particular wish of Kieran’s – and Japan.

Christy also professes a love of literature and admits to engaging in literary criticism as a hobby. Her classmates in the School of Education know of her unabashed affection for Sherlock Holmes and the most recent actor to play him, Benedict Cumberbatch. Christy says her love of everything having to do with Holmes has grown in the past two years because “there is something about a very clever person that eschews society and has a devotion to a higher purpose.” She describes the friendship between Sherlock Holmes and Watson as “the most perfect friendship in all of literature.”

This spring, Christy will have her student teaching internship at Hampton High School in Hampton, VA. She will teach 9th grade Honors Biology and International Baccalaureate Biology for 11th and 12th Grades. Christy is a Noyce Scholar, so after graduation, she will be teaching for several years in a high needs high school in Virginia. Later,

Christy would love to pursue her PhD in Biology and perhaps move back to the West Coast. Wherever she goes, as an educator she will remember that “it’s important to allow kids to see they have a lot to give. They come with experiences already.” She also will seek to live by the words of biology professor Kurt Williamson: “I can’t teach you anything. You have to teach yourself. I’m just an advertisement for the world.”

“That’s what I want to be,” Christy says.
“I’m an advertisement for the world.”

About the author

Christina Thames is an MAEd student in the Curriculum and Instruction program, focusing on Secondary English Education.