

## **December Teacher Feature: Tammy Ragan, Elementary Music Teacher & Choir Director**

*“Music is a more potent instrument than any other for education, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul.” – Plato*



Tammy Ragan is in her third year teaching music as a CG Bear. She is a Chester, South Dakota native. Her dad was a farmer and purebred hog producer--lots of 4-H and open class shows!!! Her mom was the high school secretary. She turned 80 this summer and is still helping with school board elections. Tammy has

a sister who is a teacher and a brother who is a retired banker. She had one other brother, but lost him to cancer 3 years ago.

Tammy attended South Dakota State University where she started out a broadcast journalism major but changed her major to music after her first audition for the opera. She graduated with a vocal performance and education degree with minors in Piano and French. This is her 36th year of teaching, and she swears learn something new everyday!

Tammy lives in the Fosston area with her husband, John and their furry dog, Casey. They have four children, Philip and daughter-in-law, Krystal, Maggie, Jack, and Paul. 4 kids, 4 different colleges, 4 different majors but 3 teachers in the bunch!!

**Why did you choose to teacher?** I originally got my education degree as a “backup plan” to singing opera professionally. I learned that I liked teaching A LOT more than all the auditions and cut throat competition. I don’t believe in the saying, “Those who can, do, and those who can’t, teach”. I think one has to be able to “do” in order to pass that knowledge on to our students.

**What did you do before coming to Clearbrook-Gonvick?** My last “gig” was 17 years of music teaching at Clinton-Graceville-Beardsley in the “notch” of Minnesota. I taught K-12 classroom and

vocal music, coached the show choir, one act play, and musical. Part of my assignment was teaching at two Hutterite schools that were in our district.

**What is the best part of your job at Clearbrook-Gonvick?** Being with the students!

**What is the biggest challenge of your job?** It's a never-ending job to dispel the perception of what music is, or the stereotypes around those who make music. Music is for everyone for your whole life! Mrs. Stewart has a cool bulletin board in her room with pictures of people from all walks of life and careers who have also played in band. Watching the faces of my students when they make music is worth more than all the money in the bank!

**If you could have any job in the world - what would it be? Why?** What do you do when you are not working at the school? While I can't imagine doing anything else, in an alternate universe I might be working as a personal assistant, radio show host, or something related to science.

**What do you do when you are not at school?** At home, I love to play in my kitchen trying out new recipes and baking bread. I make handmade cards and read. During the summer I like to work with flowers and my lawn. I also dabble in composing music!

**What is something you really enjoy about the holiday season?** My favorite thing about the holiday season is being with family and surprising people with treats from my kitchen!

**What are your favorite aspects of the Clearbrook-Gonvick community?** People are friendly, and like a lot of small towns, realize they have to work together to maintain the vibrancy of their small towns. I am impressed with the creativity of people and businesses in the use of the former school buildings in both Clearbrook and Gonvick. It is like the small town where I was raised.

*And now a word or two about Mrs. Ragan from the students she teaches...*

**What do you think Mrs. Ragan does when she is not at school?**

"I think she sings with her choir groups and helps with other activities" "Writes cards" "Being at home" "Laying with her dog on the couch" "Stays home sick" "She sings in the choir in Bemidji" "She makes homemade cards, sweets and sings in the Bemidji choir."

**What is the best thing about Mrs. Ragan?** "Her mother like personality" "Her singing" "She is kind" "She helps me learn a lot about music" "She gives candy rewards to the winners" "She was sweet and kind." "She is patient, kind, and understanding."

**What do you think Mrs. Ragan was like when she was in school?** "Respectful, smart, and fun" "Nice and very good singer" "Friendly" "Playing the Piano" "She wanted to do music all of the time" "She was very smart and popular and the top of her grade." "Nerdy. The one person who had it all together."

**What do you think is Mrs. Ragan favorite Christmas song?** “The German version of ‘Oh Christmas Tree’” “Jingle Bells” “Frosty the Snowman” “Noel” “Blue Christmas by Elvis”

**If you could send Mrs. Ragan on a vacation anywhere in the world, where would you send her? Why would you send her there?** “I would send her to Florida so she can enjoy the warm weather” “Hawaii because she always complaining about the cold” “Italy, because I think she will like it there” “A beach because it's hot there and she hates the cold” “To a music land, like Nashville, because she likes music and she is a music teacher” “France” “I would send her to spend time with her children. She would enjoy seeing them and have fun.”

**Besides being a teacher, what is another job you could see Mrs. Ragan doing?**

“Professional Pianist” “At the post office” “Being a professional piano player” “Pianist” “An artist” “A song writer” “A professional musician or singer.”

**What is one thing Mrs. Ragan ALWAYS says?** “You practice as you preform”

“Good morning 5th grade” “Class can you please be quiet” “Pay attention to what I am saying” “Goodbye” “That sounds nice” “Both feet on the ground.” “Breathe from your belly not your shoulders.”