



Coleman settling in with his love of history

BY JERRY CARTON
COURIER CORRESPONDENT

WINCHENDON — Among the new faculty at Murdock Middle school is history teacher Andrew Coleman and as the Fitchburg native settles in to his first permanent job, he makes no effort to hide his love of the subject.

“I’ve always liked, really liked history,” reflected Coleman who said the colonial period of American history interests him the most.

“Take John Adams,” he said of the second President. “He was a curmudgeon who didn’t like dealing with the b.s. of politics so when the battle started between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists, Adams, because he was self-doubting and not all that personable, had a hard time dealing with people.

“It’s important for kids to know these figures as people, not just names in a book,” Coleman noted, adding he thinks

Adams has probably been somewhat unappreciated by historians.

Coleman has found a path to bring this year’s divisive campaign into the classroom in a unique way. “One girl said to me she couldn’t understand why people were saying the last debate was Trump’s best because she said, ‘they were all terrible’. So I said, ‘let’s say you take three selfies and you might not like any of them, but one is the best, right?’ She said she’d never seen it that way and someone else said, ‘that was the best analogy I’ve ever heard’. This is how you connect kids to history,” Coleman remarked.

Coleman had been working as a full-time, “permanent” substitute teacher in Fitchburg when the opportunity arose to have his own classroom.

“I was one of those kids who knew what I liked,” he noted. “I was a counselor at a summer camp and I liked leading and getting campers involved so teaching was a natural thing for me to wind up doing.”

“One thing we work on, all of us in the history department, is getting students to be able to defend their answers. Asking them to memorize dates of battles doesn’t prove anything, they can always Google those, but we encourage them to have opinions and we want them to learn how to support those opinions,” he stressed.

Coleman said he thinks American history is “more tangible” for students. As is the case with any subject, there are students who like history a lot and others who aren’t as enthused but Coleman believes they can all find someone or something in US history with which



Andrew Coleman loves history with a passion

they can relate.

“That’s why we try to point out historical figures were people,” he reiterated.

It’s not that world history is entirely vague because “they’re learning about the tug-of-war between the church, religion, and secular society and that’s going on today too,” he noted, adding students also watch the 10-minute CNN Student News program which frequently focuses on international stories, but that said, “most of them seem to relate to US history more,” said Coleman.

Coleman said he’s been received well at Murdock.

“Everyone here has been very welcoming. You felt like you belonged right away,” he added.

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Friday’s Child

Andrea is an energetic 8-year-old girl of Caucasian descent. She is small for