

A SOLID FOUNDATION

BROOKS HELPS PREPARE STUDENTS FOR WORKFORCE

By KAREN LUNGU
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Though he would rather talk about his family and his faith rather than himself, Florence High School Home Bi-Ed and carpentry educator said he thoroughly has enjoyed his eight years with the Florence-Penrose School District.

Brooks, 44, and father of six children, ages 4 through 18, said his family is his impetus for everything else he does in life. For the past eight years, Brooks has worked with the young men and women in the FHS Home Bi-Ed program. They build one spec home a year as a part of their class.

"My family is the reason I do everything I do," Brooks said.

That philosophy spills over into the classroom as Brooks works with his students.

"We need to teach kids how to be productive citizens," he said. "They all need to be prepared for the workforce. I'm not too worried about college readiness; I made it through college several times. I think anyone can do it. I think it's more important we teach them to be respectful, good citizens."

Brooks' wife, Shelly, is the new Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner at St. Thomas More Hospital.

"We're real proud of her for that," Brooks said. "She works hard. She's a good mom. I can't say enough good about her."



Jeff Shane/Daily Record

Florence High School Career Technical Education Instructor Andy Brooks, left, talks with students Mitch Prickett and Isaac Terrell in the house they are building in their class.

After completing high school, Brooks earned a degree in Industrial Science and immediately landed a job with an oil company. He knew that wasn't his life's calling, he said, and, after some time working as a welder, he began looking for a teaching job.

"I started working in Garden City, Kan.," Brooks said. "I also worked in Westcliffe and then in Custer County for nine years."

Before going into the building trades part of education, Brooks installed computer networks for Westcliffe and Custer County. After teaching

computer education for a time, he developed the carpentry and building trades programs for the Custer County School District.

His Custer County stint was followed by another teaching job in Montana, before Brooks and his family settled on a farm in the Florence area. Having grown up in Eastern Colorado, he was happy to put down roots in Colorado again.

"My faith is extremely important to me when it comes to my family," Brooks said. "Teaching my kids the proper way to live life would be the value of a good day of hard work.

Teaching my students the value of a good day's hard work is important."

Supporting his wife in her work is just as important as the work he does, Brooks said.

"I love it when she supports me, too," Brooks said.

In addition to his Industrial Science degree, Brooks also has a degree in Computer Studies, as well as numerous certifications in career and technical education and construction technology, and he's a National Board Certified Teacher. The FHS Home Bi-Ed Program is funded through the Florence Home Builders Edu-

cational Foundation.

"The kids do everything from the foundation up," Brooks said. "They work on every aspect of the home, and we do that in three hours a day, basically. It's a valuable program because we're preparing the kids for the world of work. I think that's the most important thing. We're all going to be there, so we need to be ready for it."

An adventure seeker when he's not teaching, Brooks enjoys introducing his family to all things outdoors. Their next big adventure, he said, is to take a zipline tour.

"My wife always tells me my life is a big adventure," he said. "So anything that has to do with adventure, we like to do."

The family rafts, hunts and hikes, too, Brooks said.

Brooks also does construction as a side-career, as well as run Little Rivers Adventures, LLC, with his wife.

"We have two sections of that," Brooks said. "One is the construction. The other is Little Rivers Adventure Farm, LLC. We dabble in cows, pigs and goats and all that fun stuff."

The Florence-Penrose School District, Brooks said, is a great place to work.

"I can't think of a better place to work and doing what I'm doing," Brooks said. "I like to get up and go to work every day. The most difficult part is leaving my family."