



**ROMEO
COMMUNITY
SCHOOLS**

GOOD NEWS ACROSS 'R' DISTRICT

February 14, 2025

Romeo Partners for Life: A Special Valentine's Day Edition

When he was first hired at Romeo High School, Mike Savage recalls he was intrigued by how many married people worked in the district.

"As I got to know people better, I realized that it was just a great place to be and even better if your spouse worked there as well," he said.

This Valentine's Day, we are celebrating several of those married couples. They share how they ended up together and at Romeo Community Schools, what they learned from one another, some of the pros and cons of being married to a fellow teacher, and how they make one another better.



Sarah and Mike Savage

Amanda Moore Elementary and Romeo High School

Sarah and Mike Savage met their junior year at Michigan State University. They worked together at the ice cream store on campus, the Dairy Store.

"There was a leak in one of the water lines that rinsed the ice cream scoopers," Sarah recalls. "Mike tried to fix it with some glue we had on hand, but it was water-soluble glue, so it didn't work. I remember thinking that even if he wasn't handy, I really liked him and maybe we could live near my parents so my dad could fix everything for us. Now I realize that was just the beginning! Mike is a tinkerer, a problem solver and he doesn't back down from a challenge. He has fixed, built, remodeled and created so many wonderful things over the years. There is no stopping him once he gets an idea in his head."

Given this fix-it nature and propensity for tinkering, it's no wonder Mike was hired 10 years ago at Romeo High School, where he currently teaches physics, robotics and mechatronics. He also coaches the middle and high school robotics team.

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Sarah, too, was drawn to the STEM world of teaching. She was teaching first grade in Almont when Mike sent her a posting he had seen for a STEM teacher at Amanda Moore Elementary School.

“It sounded like something I’d love to do, so I got busy updating my resume right away,” Sarah said. “I was so excited for a new challenge and so thankful he had opened that email!”

The two make each other better as teachers by bouncing ideas off one another. Sarah said Mike works through “the science of things” with her, always coming up with a solution when she is stumped, while Mike said Sarah “is incredibly organized and always prepared. She inspires me to make sure my lessons are engaging and fun while still rigorous.”

The best part of working as teachers in the same district? Both agree it’s the vacations.

“Now that our kids are older, we’ve really enjoyed adventuring around Michigan or beyond for a long weekend or taking a midweek vacation in the summer,” Sarah said. “We have the time to make great family memories.”

Mike shared another benefit: “It is nice to have a spouse to talk to about work related things who understands what is happening in the world of education and, more specifically, in Romeo.”



Laura and Curt Rienas
Romeo High School

Laura and Curt Rienas met when Laura was coaching the RHS cheerleading team and Curt was home watching his brother play basketball.

“I asked him out and the rest is history,” Laura said.

Laura is in her 26th year at RHS and Curt is in his 24th. After graduating from Grand Valley State University, where he played football, Curt initially planned to stay as a coach, but an opportunity to return to his alma mater where his fiancée already had a teaching position drew him back to Romeo.

Laura and Curt share similar philosophies not only as teachers, but as coaches.

“Our beliefs in terms of educating our youth are pretty similar,” Laura said. “We often share the same students and many evenings at the dinner table the conversations revolve around our jobs. We bounce ideas off of one another frequently. It’s not easy leaving work at work when we are so involved. Not to mention that our children also went through RCS.”

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“We both teach with the same heart, driven by a shared purpose of making a positive impact on our students and community,” Curt said. “While our classroom styles differ, our ultimate goal remains the same. When you’re deeply passionate about your purpose and invest so much of yourself, it inevitably influences every aspect of your life. Many dinner conversations have made me reconsider how I approach situations at school. Having the opportunity to run decisions through the perspective of two passionate educators always leads to a better outcome than going at it alone.”

Laura doesn’t see any disadvantages to working in the same building as her husband. Until this year, they rarely saw each other during the day unless one of them sought the other out for some reason. This year since Curt started teaching Link Crew, he sometimes asks her to pop in to contribute to the class discussions.

The only downside Curt sees is “that we feel our students’ pain twice as much. When they hurt, we hurt together.”

“Curt makes me a better person and a better teacher,” Laura said. “I am grateful that we have been able to work together educating many of the same students. I love that he understands what I do and can sympathize with me on both the hard days and the good days. He helps to keep me grounded. I am thankful that we had the opportunity to work together for so many years as both educators and coaches.”



Erin and Tony Gillespie
Hamilton-Parsons Elementary School

Erin and Tony Gillespie met at a church youth event at Olivet College when they were in high school.

“We were both just there to hang out with a friend for the weekend,” said Erin. She even remembers the exact date: March 4, 2000. She was 15 and he was 18.

Both are in their second year at Hamilton-Parsons Elementary, where Erin teaches fifth grade and Tony teaches fourth grade. Previously they taught together at Richmond Middle School.

“It just fell into place,” Erin said of the move to Ham-Par. “We didn’t request it. The openings were there. It works well for us.”

“We interviewed at the same time and just happened to fit in,” Tony said.

Tony says Erin is the reason he is a teacher today.

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“I was majoring in computer science, but when I decided that wasn't for me, I just followed Erin into a couple of teaching classes. Twenty years later, here I am.”

While Erin might have served as Tony's initial inspiration, Erin says he continues to motivate her to do better.

“We're pretty competitive with each other to begin with so we're always working to be as good as the other one,” she said. “Tony is so naturally amazing at his job. I feel like I'm working my tail off just to be as good as him on a bad day. We talk about instruction a lot. Riding to and from school gives us time to hash out different speed bumps we encounter. There are so many aspects of teaching that we can talk about because we both understand the little intricacies of our profession. If there's anything he's working on, I end up upping my game as well and I'm sure vice versa.”

Tony agrees that each inspires and motivates the other.

“We have been riding together into school for almost 10 years now, and we talk about everything that happened,” he said. “It gives us time to hear how each other's ideas worked, give feedback, try things out, and start the cycle all over again. We are always trying to be as good as the other one, and it pushes us to always get better.”

The disadvantage of both being teachers, according to Erin, is sometimes they talk *too* much about school. This can be annoying to their daughter, she said. Conferences also can be tricky balancing their time as a family, although their daughter makes the most of this by enjoying time with her grandmother.

Tony can't think of a downside – only the advantages.

“The best thing is that she understands pretty much everything I have to say without me having to explain,” he said. “Whether I want to vent, need help, want to share a fun story, it's just easy to relate that to a teacher. I also get to hear about the further adventures of my students as they go through fifth grade, which is wonderful.”

Erin enjoys inheriting some of Tony's students, although they have different classroom styles.

“He is loud, lights are always on high, volume is up, total goofball,” she said. “I'm very calm, quiet, low lights, chill, but also a goofball.”

“People ask all the time if it's hard to spend so much time together, but I like teaching much more with her around,” Tony said. “I don't actually see her very much, but it's nice to know she's there.”

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Holly and Tom Anderson *Romeo High School*

Holly and Tom Anderson met during their sophomore year at Kalamazoo College. It was the summer of 1989 and Tom had just returned from study abroad. Both were active in athletics – Holly was a swimmer and Tom played football – and shared a lot of mutual friends. Tom proposed during Kalamazoo College’s homecoming in 1992 and they married the following summer.

While Holly always knew she wanted to be a teacher, Tom wasn’t so sure. His mother taught for nearly 40 years and he had aunts and uncles in education. Holly, on the other hand, was the first in her family to pursue education as a career.

The couple worked together in Edwardsburg, where Tom taught 7th grade English and Holly was a middle school counselor, before they relocated to Romeo. Initially Holly was offered a position as a counselor at Amanda Moore Elementary School. Unfortunately, there were no jobs in any district for which Tom was certified. Holly turned down the offer, but that morning Romeo posted two openings for English positions – and the rest is history. Eventually Holly moved to the high school and they have been working in the same building ever since.

After teaching together for 30 years, Tom and Holly don’t know anything different. For them, “it is the way it should be.” They enjoy being on the same schedule and have enjoyed daily trips during their breaks – including skiing in Colorado during spring break, one of their favorite activities together.

The two support one another in a variety of ways. Holly reminds Tom of the things he needs to do for school that week. Tom tries to listen when Holly needs a sounding board. Mainly, they are there for each other.

“We know each other’s struggles and challenges and that allows us to be good support for each other,” Tom said.

They are also grateful for the community Romeo has provided their family.

“We raised our family here,” Tom said. “Our three kids, Tommy (2014), Jake (2016), and Chloe (2022) all graduated from Romeo High School. Our kids had amazing teachers and administrators that prepared them well for college and beyond. We are so thankful.”

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Lauren and Adam Busuttill

Romeo Middle School and Hamilton-Parsons

Lauren and Adam Busuttill met the good old-fashioned way – on eHarmony. According to the couple, “We were a mathematical AI match made in heaven before dating was a thing. Having a common interest in education definitely helped us to make a fast connection.”

Lauren started teaching at Hevel Elementary School in 2014 and fell in love with the district’s mission and values.

“Our hope was always to have Adam join the RCS family too, but we had to wait for the right opportunity to open up for us,” Lauren said. “When it became available, we were on a family trip, and we actually went to the top of Brockway Mountain to make sure we had the service to submit the application!”

Lauren is now teaching at Romeo Middle School and Adam is in his third year teaching music at Hamilton-Parsons.

“We really believe in the community, the family atmosphere, and the philosophy of the district which drew us to working here and bringing our girls into the district with us as well,” Adam said.

Adam also believes teaching in different buildings at different levels leads to new insights and balanced conversations at home.

“We are able to talk and adjust our perspectives based on our partner’s experience,” he said. “It’s nice to be able to talk shop and come up with creative solutions and ideas using our partner as a sounding board.”

Lauren agrees. “It feels good to share struggles or celebrate wins with someone who understands, Adam reminds me that every day is an opportunity for making learning fun and engaging. He is so creative in planning and execution. Somehow he can make even the most boring or difficult content exciting. It’s easy for me to lose perspective or to get lost in the intensity of the secondary curriculum, but Adam reminds me about growing the whole child through conversation, play, is important and possible.”

The advantages to being married to a fellow teacher are numerous, from sharing time off together and coordinating family trips, to having someone at home who understands their partner’s daily work life and can support their challenges.

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“I have a better understanding for the whole student because of the things I have learned from Lauren,” Adam said.

Both Lauren and Adam recommend spending time together outside of school.

“We have camped across the US and traveled to Europe with our time together,” Lauren said. “We have a passion to see the world and open our kids’ eyes to new experiences and cultures. Our teaching schedule makes this possible for us.”

Adds Adam: “It is a very rewarding profession that is near and dear to our hearts, but we always find time to travel, have date nights, and spend time with family and friends outside of school.”

Lauren agrees it’s important to find a balance.

“Some days I feel like I can be a really good teacher or I can be a really good wife or mom. I struggle not to bring home work – whether it’s physical materials or emotional load. Over the years we have realized how and when to help each other find balance and manage the load, and that’s a unique struggle when two teachers find each other.”



Erin and Patrick Salembier

Indian Hills and Romeo Middle School

Erin and Patrick Salembier met performing in a musical, *Little Mary Sunshine*, at the Macomb Center for the Performing Arts. They were both enrolled in classes at Macomb Community College, including in the theater department.

Both Erin and Patrick wanted to work in the Romeo school district ever since they started to pursue a degree in education together at Oakland University. Patrick completed his student teaching at Romeo and was a sub for the district. Erin, who attended Indian Hills Elementary School, was a kindergarten aide for Romeo.

When they graduated, they both applied for openings with RCS, but without success. Erin started teaching at a charter school and Patrick taught at the Brandon School District in Oakland County.

“We didn’t give up,” Patrick said. “We kept applying to Romeo and eventually we got hired.”

Erin has now taught in the district for 23 years, 21 of those years at Indian Hills. Patrick is in his 22nd year, all at the middle school level.

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Patrick and Erin bring different styles into the classroom. Patrick describes Erin as a “type A kind of person” and himself as “more laid back.”

“I think we help balance each other out,” he added.

They enjoy the same advantages as their other married colleagues – summers and holidays off together, which allows for more family time. Another advantage of being married to someone in the same profession is that “they understand what you deal with on a daily basis,” Patrick said. “Sometimes we have to vent to each other to get things off our chest. Some people outside of this field just wouldn’t understand some of the stuff we talk about to each other.”

“The disadvantage is that we are both committed to our classrooms and tend to want to spend time at work, but have to try to balance home, work and our kids,” he said. “We wish life could be like a Hallmark show, but the reality is that life has its ups and downs, but we are committed to seeing each other through and making the best of it.”



Jenn and Rich Boggio
Romeo High School

Jenn and Rich Boggio met at Rich’s new teacher orientation. Jenn had been hired the year before.

“I was with my new teacher group and she walked through the teachers lounge and I was like...’hey...who is that?!’” Rich recalls. “It wasn’t until weeks later that I built up the courage to actually ask her on a date.”

Jenn, who was hired in the fall of 1998 to teach mathematics and computers, is now in her 27th year at Romeo High School. Rich is in his 26th year. He taught English until 2017, when he became the Academy Coach.

In over two and a half decades of teaching in the same building, Rich and Jenn have learned a lot from each other.

“Jenn has helped me become more organized,” Rich said. “I’m kind of a fly by the seat of my pants guy and through the years her organization has rubbed off on me.”

Said Jenn, “It is always great to be able to bounce ideas off of each other. As he moved into the role of Academy Coach, he wasn’t one of the Link Crew teachers anymore. It’s great to be able to have a common certification even though it’s not a class that either one of us went into teaching for.”

Advantages to being married to a fellow educator include being on the same schedule, sharing snow days, and knowing the same co-workers and students, according to Jenn.

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“We also understand and value the stories we tell each other, especially when it’s about common students,” Rich added.

The two agree on an unusual disadvantage – picking out a baby name.

“Some names just carry different feelings, memories and connotations,” Rich said. “We were happy when we found Carsyn.”

Rich says that while they don’t see each other much during the school day other than at lunch, he does enjoy “knowing she is around all the time.”



Alana and John Phillips

Washington Elementary School and Romeo High School/Romeo Middle School

Alana and John Phillips met when they were in high school. John was a senior and Alana was a sophomore. They both grew up in Romeo, but Alana has spent her 18-year teaching career in the school district in different subjects and at different grade levels, for the past four years as a music teacher at Washington Elementary School. John taught in Fitzgerald Public Schools for 10 years before coming to Romeo High School and Romeo Middle School, where he has taught band for the past 11 years.

The two have learned a lot from one another during their decades in teaching.

“John has taught me a lot about what it takes to be a quality teacher, whether he realizes it or not,” Alana said. “He is extremely passionate about what he does and will always do what is in his power for his students. Of course, I see it and hear it, and so it rubs off on you. However, he also instills in me my own self-confidence. He supports and believes in what I am doing as well. Lifting me up allows me to lift my students up.”

Said John: “Alana is an incredibly creative and caring teacher and person. She has an ability to come up with new ways of teaching topics and breaking away from the easy and conventional ideas. I’ve always appreciated the work and dedication that she shows for her students. It has been the same whether in Middle School Science and ELA, elementary classroom teaching, or her recent move into music education.”

What the two see as the biggest advantage of sharing a profession is that they each have someone who knows what the other is going through.

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“They understand it on a different level because they are living it too,” Alana said. “We know what the job takes and we can support each other accordingly.”

“Being a band director is incredibly time-consuming,” John added. “Like coaching, it requires many nights and weekends, work over the summer, and taking trips out of state. Having a spouse who understands why you are dedicated to teaching makes a huge difference. It isn’t always easy, but knowing that you have the support helps to make it all work.”

As far as disadvantages go, they agree with Rich and Jen Boggio that picking names for their kids was challenging.

“It can also be difficult to turn the part of your brain off that is obsessing over lesson plans, worrying about a student, etc.,” Alana said. “Sometimes we get stuck in that mental place at the same time.”



Jamee and Mike Nuttall

Hevel Elementary and Romeo Middle School

Jamee and Mike Nuttall met in the winter of 2003. Jamee was already teaching in Romeo and Mike was attending Saginaw Valley State University to get his teaching certificate after he earned a bachelor’s degree in Anatomy/Physiology.

While they were dating, Mike was living in Bay City. To be closer to Jamee, he applied for a position teaching science at Romeo High School and was hired to teach Biology and Anatomy/Physiology.

Mike currently teaches science at Romeo Middle School and Jamee is a third grade teacher at Hevel Elementary School.

Advantages to being married to a fellow teacher include vacation times together, which was especially valuable while they were raising small children. Disadvantages are that they often talk about work at home rather than leaving work at work.

Gaining each other’s perspective of different grade levels has also been beneficial. For example, Jamee appreciates how Mike has helped her to expand her knowledge of science.

“I often come home and ask how I can bring an idea or hands-on activity to my third graders that will help with their scientific thinking,” she said. “I keep in mind that someday he may have some of these same students when they enter middle school. Therefore I try to get my students thinking and wondering so that they have that curiosity when they get into his class or lab.”

In turn, she believes she has helped him “by encouraging him to think of the whole child and what experiences they bring with them,” rather than focusing purely on the science.

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