Trey Smith

East Mountain High School | Humanities instructor / speech and debate coach

No debate about Smith's success in forensics

BY RACHEL SAMS | NMBW ASSOCIATE EDITOR

A little over a decade ago, Trey Smith was a shy teenager.

Today, at 28, he's the coach of East Mountain High School's speech and debate team, which took the top spot in the state competition this year. It was the first time in more than 20 years that debate heavyweight Albuquerque Academy didn't win the prize.

Smith says his ability to lead his team stems from the confidence he developed competing in speech and debate in high school.

He joined the teaching staff at East Mountain High School, a public charter school, four years ago, and launched a debate team with six students. This year, 50 of East Mountain's 330 students took part.

"It has kind of become the cool thing to do," he said.

Peers are seeking Smith out, too. He'll soon begin a term as president of the New Mexico Speech and Debate Association.

"I like to give students opportunities to make their voice heard," he said.

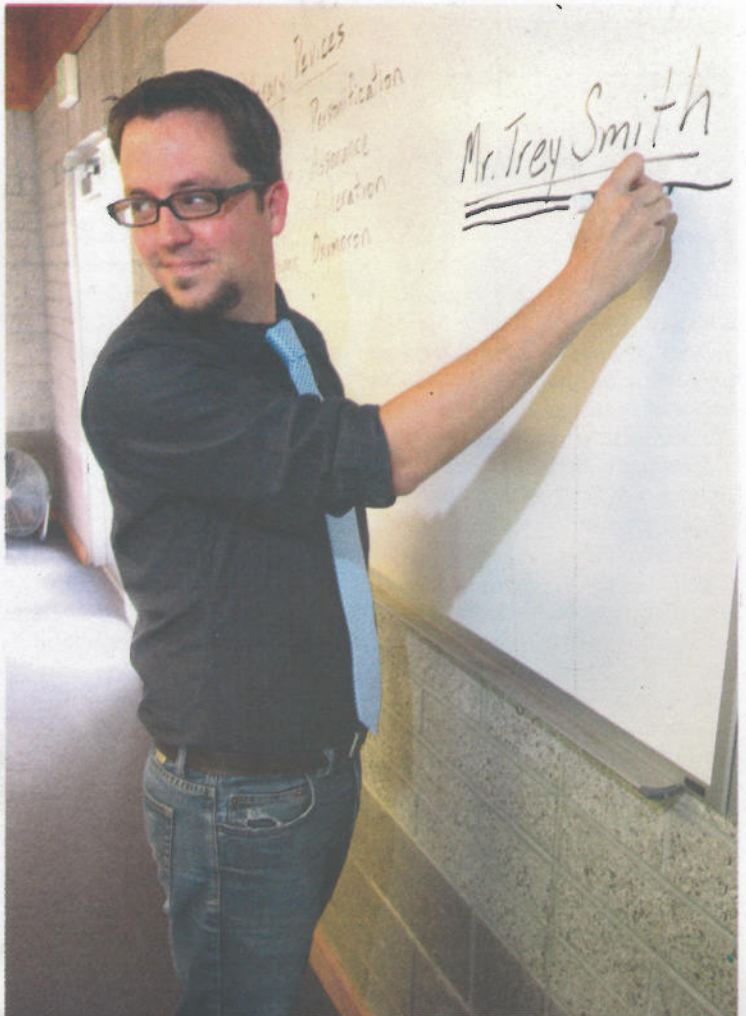
What is your biggest weakness?
I do have a tendency to take a lot of things on ... I tend not to say no, but I'm getting better.

What is something you used to think was cool, then thought was lame and now think is cool again?
I was very nerdy as a kid. I read a lot of comic books, played a lot of video games, Dungeons & Dragons. There was a time in college where I thought, I'm going to stay away from that. As I work with high school students, I realize a lot of it has a lot of value.

What makes you laugh?
My wife, and all the kids I work with. They're the funniest people I know. They're a constant source of entertainment.

Education: bachelor's degree, English and philosophy, and master's degree, public administration, University of New Mexico

Age: 28

Family: wife Cristin and their nine-year-old pit bull

Community involvement: founded Albuquerque Speech & Debate Institute, a weeklong summer program; incoming president, New Mexico Speech and Debate Association; teaches part time in UNM honors program