



**By Carolyn Lee**

***The Imperial Republican***

When patrons of Chase County Schools (CCS) saluted Mary Fortkamp at a retirement party last May, she really hoped that she would be walking into the school as a teacher this fall.

The Chicago native was a teachers aide during the 2011-12 school year, only because, she said, there wasn't a teaching position available at that time.

Fortkamp was thrilled when she was offered a first grade teaching job for the 2012-13 school year.

The friendly teacher obtained her Bachelor of Science degree in early childhood education from Concordia University in Wisconsin in 1998. In the same year she received certification in early childhood education, birth to third grade.

Fortkamp taught kindergarten at the Milwaukee German Immersion School in Milwaukee, Wis. in 1999. She then taught English as a Second Language from 1999-2000 at the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Missions in Berlin, Germany.

She then taught German at St. Lorenz Lutheran School in Frankenmuth, Mich. from 2000-05.

Fortkamp was the director and a teacher at Allstars Preschool and Daycare in Imperial from 2007-2011.

She plans to teach her first grade students German, as "I don't want to lose it. They're so excited, because they're all on the same level so they all get to learn it together," as opposed to learning Spanish with some students already literate.

Since she is originally from Chicago, Fortkamp said "I hope to give them more multi-cultural experience. I'll talk about big cities" and life outside a small, midwestern town.

Hobbies include reading, traveling—preferably to Chicago to see family—shopping, baseball games, and doing things with her husband, Jerel, who is an IT for CCS and is employed by Allo Communications.