By Carolyn Lee
The Imperial Republican

When Ashley (Johnson) Exum was in kindergarten at then Imperial Grade School, she couldn't have imagined that she would teach kindergarten there as an adult.

Exum, a 2004 Chase County Schools graduate, returned to Imperial the first of June after being hired as one of four kindergarten teachers.

She and husband Eric, who is staying home with 11-month old Briella, actually purchased the house owned one time by her kindergarten teacher, Lorrie Vossler.

Exum wanted to move back to Imperial because her family lives here. Her parents are Jeri and Ron Johnson.

In addition, Eric grew up in the Ogallala area and has family in Colorado.

But most of all, the Exums want to raise their family in a smaller town.

Exum obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Education degree from the University of Nebraska-Kearney in December 2008. She also has endorsements in elementary education K-6 and early childhood unified.

Exum was a substitute teacher from January through May of 2009 in the Kearney and Shelton Public Schools, teaching pre-kindergarten through 12th grade.

She taught pre-kindergarten and Title I reading from August 2009 to May 2012 at the Pleasanton Elementary School.

Kindergarten teaching is challenging, Exum said, because "They're learning how to get into important routines, and sharing. Some kids have never been in a school system" such as preschool.

"I want to get them to understand how a school runs."

For her 17 students, Exum wants "everyone to come away saying 'I love kindergarten.' If they don't enjoy it they won't enjoy school. I want them to come back excited about first grade."

Exum enjoys going on walks with her family, watching movies and traveling.