

Mesa Alum - Dr. Erik Huffman

Speaking this year at the commencement ceremony for our 2023 Grizzly graduates is Mesa Ridge alumnus Dr. Erik Huffman. As an entrepreneur, cybersecurity expert, Mesa Ridge track and robotics coach, and local community member, Dr. Huffman embodies Grizzly Greatness through his motivation to succeed and his compassion for his community.

As Dr. Huffman approached his own graduation in 2004, he was unsure of where life would take him. “I didn’t have a clear direction and I was undecided about what I wanted to do.” His time at Mesa Ridge had been rich in experiences that sparked his curiosity.

He specifically recalls skating through physics with Mr. Reeder on a literal skateboard. “I clearly learned that gravity is a thing.”

By the time Dr. Huffman graduated, his future came into focus. He had always been interested in technology, how computers are structured, and how hackers exploit weaknesses in technology systems. He earned degrees in Computer Science (BS), IT Project Management (MS), and Management (PhD), leading to his current position as an expert in cybersecurity education and hacker psychology. In 2012, Dr. Huffman founded Handshake Leadership, a cybersecurity education organization, earning him Young Entrepreneur of the Year for the 2018 Pikes Peak Region Small Business Week.

In addition to his work in cybersecurity, Dr. Huffman is the current president of Pikes Peak Robotics, an organization that offers low- to no-cost robotics education and competition to students of all ages in the region. He became interested in robotics through his membership in BARSL, a government research and development advisory group, and decided to bring his expertise back to Widefield. Now he works in partnership with Widefield School District and other districts to provide this opportunity to inspire young engineers.



Mesa Alum - Dr. Erik Huffman, cont.'

Dr. Huffman is following in the footsteps of his own mentors who inspired him to succeed. Mr. Duren, for example, was the assistant principal at Mesa Ridge when he was a student and Mr. Duren's encouragement and belief in him inspired Dr. Huffman. "Being around motivated people motivated me." To find their passions in life, Dr. Huffman encourages young Grizzlies to "try everything. If you are interested, try it. Pick what you enjoy doing, not just the things you are good at. If you choose something that you are good at, but you hate it, you will hate your job every day." His time at Mesa Ridge allowed him to test out potential career paths because he took the leap into new and unfamiliar experiences.

What drives his mission for serving his community? Gratitude and a sense of responsibility to where he came from: "If you are fortunate enough to receive, you should be fortunate enough to give and help others because your community is your home. The entire community is home. If you can help 'home', it is the best thing ever. Every dollar I gave away felt better than every dollar I made. You can leave a legacy rather than just leaving items behind."

Although his talent in cybersecurity and accomplishments in entrepreneurship are remarkable, his service to the students and families of Widefield illustrate his true character. Whether he's serving on a national cybersecurity advisory board or helping a Widefield elementary student pilot a robot, Dr. Erik Huffman demonstrates the best of what it means to be a Mesa Ridge Grizzly.

