

# THE LEARNING Curve

This page was written and designed by Education First in cooperation with the Bibb County Board of Education, the Peyton Anderson Foundation, and The Telegraph.

Your weekly guide to students, schools, teachers and triumphs in Bibb County's Public Schools

## Getting to Know

**Lynne Donehoo**  
Principal  
Burghard Elementary



**Job Description:** Instructional leader of our school and the lead learner. I must manage resources and people to maximize the quality of instruction in our building

**Hometown:** Dublin, Georgia

**Schools attended:** Middle Georgia College; Georgia College and State University; Georgia State University

**Degrees:** Specialist Degree in School Administration; Masters in School Counseling; Reading Specialist Degree

**Professional Affiliations:** National Education Association, Georgia Association of Educators, Bibb Association of Educators, Delta Kappa Gamma, Bibb Elementary Principal Association, Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development

**Years in education:** 28

**Years in Bibb County Public Schools:** 16

**Years in your current position/school:** First year

**Favorite Teacher growing up and why:** Virginia Lafuente, who taught Spanish at Dublin High School. She was my favorite because she demanded excellence. Ms. Lafuente also shared her personal struggle of how she left Cuba as a young widow with two young sons and had to start over in the United States. She had been an attorney in Havana and none of her degrees were recognized in the United States. She went back to school so she could teach American students Spanish and support herself and her two sons.

**Personal educational philosophy:** Public education is truly the great equalizer. If you expect and insist on excellence then students and teachers rise to that expectation. A quality public education benefits every segment of our society.

**Professional Goals:** I want to be principal in a School of Excellence.

**Why education?** I love to work with students, and it keeps you young.

**Favorite story from the classroom:** For me, one of the most rewarding things as an educator is to see a student grow and mature from an awkward adolescent into a mature, productive individual. Helping student achieve their goals is an awesome experience.

## A Community Says Thank You to a Revered Teacher

"I've always taught kindergarten because I've loved every day of it," says Heard Elementary teacher Janice Simpson, and there have been a lot of those days. After 30 years of teaching (29 of those in the same room at the same school), she is retiring this year, and Principal Sandra Stanley says she has been spending the year "trying to convince her to stay."

The two first met when they were both Parent-Teacher Association volunteers at Neel Elementary, and "we've been together ever since," says Stanley. It was their work with students that made them realize they wanted to dedicate their lives to education. Simpson went to Mercer University, and Stanley went to Macon State College and later Wesleyan University. Not only did she move into teaching, she has remained active in Heard's PTA throughout the years, heading it up several times.

"You have to be happy and involved in the job" to make a difference, says Simpson. After earning her degree she was one of the first six kindergarten teachers in the county after the state began to fund the program. She considered a move to first grade, but the program changed from two half-day classes to a full day, allowing her to work more in-depth with the children.

With 30 years of teaching behind her, she has become a pillar of the community surrounding Heard Elementary. Not only did she teach her own daughter at that age, she is now at a point where she is teaching former students' children. According to Stanley, hundreds of children have passed through her classroom.

Beyond students, she has also served as a mentor to student teachers, new teachers, and even experienced teachers looking to draw upon her experience. "I've certainly found mentoring teachers to be very rewarding," she says. This year, there are several teachers at Heard who were her student teachers. According to Stanley, they were made to feel so welcome in the Heard community through their work with Simpson, they just wanted to stay.

Right now, she is currently mentor-

"She has trained so many teachers," Stanley praises.

Her effect has certainly been felt throughout the years, touching the lives of so many families. At their annual kindergarten presentation, the community turned out en masse to pay tribute to this dedicated educator who knew from the beginning that a child's education begins the very first day they step into a school...though she was caught completely unprepared for the outstanding show of support.

After the classes finished their songs and dances, she was called on stage, not knowing what was about to happen. From a side door, people from oldest to youngest came up on stage to present her a rose. As their names were called out, tears filled Simpson's eyes when she fully realized who was handing her the roses. A student from EVERY one of her kindergarten classes from her 30 years had been contacted to pay tribute to her. The biggest surprise of all, her own daughter who had driven down from North Carolina that afternoon for the celebration.

"I can't believe this is my 30<sup>th</sup> year," Simpson says. To her, the time has flown by in a job she has truly loved. "I was meant to be a kindergarten teacher."



Heard Kindergarten teacher Janice Simpson with a student from every one of her classes in the past 30 years.

ing two other new teachers and is working with Special Needs kindergarten teachers on how to provide their students with a well-rounded education. "They're involved with everything we do," says Simpson.

## Bibb County Public Schools Honors its Volunteers

"We always consider this a special time of the year," Bibb County Public Schools Deputy Superintendent Sylvia McGee told a packed Weaver Middle School Cafeteria.

"Without you, we couldn't do our job," Weaver Principal Dr. Pam Carswell agreed.

Each year, Bibb County honors one of its greatest treasures with a breakfast and awards ceremony: the volunteers. The parents, grandparents, and other family and friends that donate their free time to the schools reading to students, working in the office, chaperoning events, raising money, and any other activity they're asked to do. They were treated to breakfast, performances by the schools' musical ensembles, awards, and praise upon praise on how much they are appreciated.

"Volunteers are a key part in making any school work," Dr. Carswell said to a spontaneous burst of applause and cheers.

At the breakfast were each school's Volunteer Coordinator and the more than 300 volunteers who contributed 100 or more hours to their school. The event this year was sponsored by Attorney at Law Lauren Logan Benedict, Deputy Superintendent Sylvia McGee, Jason CanAken Construction, Amy Morton, Diverse Data Services, Attorney at Law Ann E. Parman, the Law Offices of J. Michael Cranford, and Wachovia Bank.

The Award of Excellence, given to the volunteer with the most hours donated, was presented to Sara Whitby at Bruce Elementary for donating 1,075.75 hours. The Top G.R.E.A.T. (Grandparents/Retirees Excited About Tutoring) – the most hours by a G.R.E.A.T. volunteer – was Hattie Collins of King-Danforth Elementary with 1,446 hours.



Parent Teacher Resource Center Director Gwen Russell accepts the first Linda Miller Helping Hands Award.

Several awards are presented in honor of people who have given much of themselves to help keep the volunteer program growing. Ann Hicks was the chairman of the Junior Leagues Steering Committee which helped start the volunteer program, and her award recognizes outstanding overall school involvement in the spirit of volunteerism. Burdell-Hunt Elementary School earned this honor with their 1,217 volunteers donating more than 9,000 hours.

Juanita B. Krysalca began the G.R.E.A.T. program, and the award in her name is presented to the school which has recruited the most G.R.E.A.T. volunteers during the school year. This year, the honor went to Heritage Elementary for recruiting 346.

Volunteer Coordinator Linda Miller retired last year after 16 years of serving the

Bibb County Public Schools. In her honor, an award was created to honor an organization which has demonstrated outstanding dedication and support of Bibb County Public Schools. The first recipient of this award was presented to the Parent-Teacher Resource Center under the direction of Gwen Russell for her outreach to the community, parents, and teachers.

Harriet Madison - former Bibb County teacher, retired G.R.E.A.T. volunteer, and wife of the late Superintendent Dr. Thomas Madison - has an award honoring her which is given to the school with the greatest increase in volunteer hours. Alexander II Elementary was awarded this for an increase of 4,078.25 hours.

The Red Apple Award, given to the school with highest number of total hours, was awarded again to Heritage Elementary for logging 23,463 hours from more than 900 volunteers. The Golden Apple Award, which represents the most number of hours donated per student (total hours donated divided by number of students enrolled). This year's winner was the Butler Early Childcare Center, which donated 2,900 hours to its 92 students for an average of 31.2 hours per student.

McGee recognized volunteers Stephanie VanAken and Teresa Cranford who gathered all of the data this year and organized the breakfast awards ceremony. "As a result of their efforts, we are here this morning," she said, calling them forward. The room was on its feet cheering as the two announced the total for the year: more than 194,000 hours had been donated to Bibb County Public Schools. At a minimum wage of \$5.15, that equals more than one million dollars of work.