

Staffer works to keep school on cutting edge

By MEGAN VEIT
News Correspondent

Cridersville Elementary was the first elementary in the Wapakoneta City Schools District to get a computer lab. Since that time, Candy Jackson has worked to keep her school cutting edge.

Jackson, the school's librarian and technologist, is settling into her new home after 20 years at the previous Cridersville Elementary. Books are on shelves. Computers are coming in.

In addition to her other committee appointments, Jackson will be teaching computer classes to all of Cridersville's more than 250 students.

"They'll learn more of how the computer works," Jackson said of the new computer lab equipment.

Lessons will include word processing, educational games, and possibly even the dreaded research.

Since her first day of involvement with Cridersville Elementary, Jackson has done a lot of learning herself. Jackson, who was raised in Shawnee, moved to Elida with her husband, a Cridersville School graduate.

From there, the couple moved to Cridersville in

time for their two daughters, Maggie Herbst, 27, and Katie Jackson, 25, to attend the town's elementary.

"It just felt like home, like this was where we needed to be," Jackson said.

When Maggie entered kindergarten, Jackson began working with the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO).

"That's how I got to know the workings of the school," Jackson said.

It is also how her employment began, first as an aid with the Disadvantaged Pupils Public Fund. She worked five hours a day and spent two hours volunteering in the cafeteria, selling snacks to students.

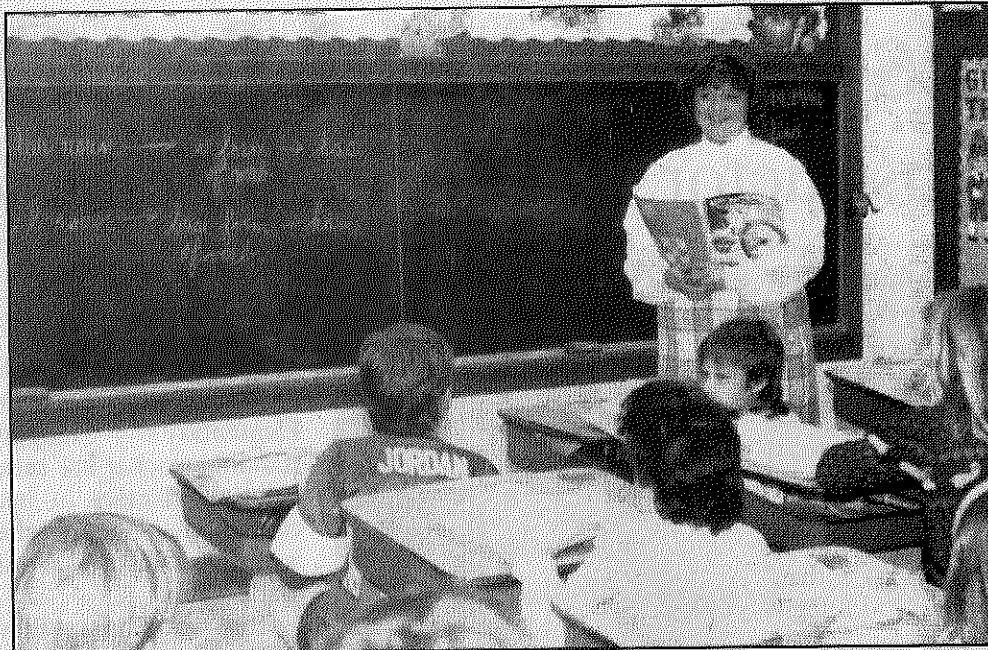
From there, Jackson became the school's librarian. When a computer lab was added, she was given the task of learning how to keep it going.

"It was new to everybody," Jackson said, who was able to learn as she went.

From there, she was able to oversee a transition to computer-based inventory and check-out systems in the library.

Later, the computer lab was incorporated into the

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Ruth Doll addresses her students during a lesson of verb tenses. While she originally taught at Norton City Schools, she said she has loved every minute teaching at Cridersville and she understands the excitement about moving to a new school building, but the sentimental feelings of leaving a school with memories behind.

Photo provided

Closing of school, moving to new building bittersweet

By MEGAN VEIT
News Correspondent

While many Cridersville residents have childhood memories of their closing school, seeing Cridersville Elementary move is no less bittersweet for one northwestern Ohio native.

"I wasn't immediately excited," said Ruth Doll, who was raised in Napoleon. "But I was young — what did I know?"

After spending nearly three decades teaching in the community, Doll said she can identify those who have childhood memories of the school.

"When you spent 30 years in a place, that's a big chunk of your life," Doll said. "We consider ourselves a family and really go out of our way for each other. It's been a wonderful place to teach because of that."

After attending the University of Akron, she

began working at a school in the city. Doll did her student teaching at Norton City Schools and was hired on, substituting for one year and teaching for two more years.

Toward the end of her second year teaching at Norton, Doll's husband, John, whom she married after her first year of teaching, made a life-changing decision.

When her husband was transferred to Cridersville, she was hesitant to leave a good situation. At Norton, she was encouraged and supported as she was "the puppy" of the teaching staff.

"I was the new kid on the block. I feel very blessed," Doll said of her

time with the school.

It didn't take long once she began teaching at Cridersville Elementary to find that same sense of community.

Doll had not resigned her post at Norton until

the August of their move, meaning it was too late to apply for a position with her new town's school.

"I felt very fortunate," Doll said of her time after the move.

Instead of immediately applying for work, she decided to stay at home and raise her two boys. She enjoyed the time with her children, and in 1978 she began substituting at Cridersville Elementary, a school her boys had attended.

After two years of busy

substituting schedules, Doll thought, "This [is] crazy. I should just work."

She was offered a position at United Local School or Cridersville School and opted to stay.

While Doll still has fond memories of her Norton days, Cridersville feels like home.

Doll has taught fourth grade for 28 years and is now unpacking her classroom in the new elementary school, where she will continue teaching fourth grade.

"It's a long time in one grade level," Doll said with a chuckle.

When she began teaching fourth grade, Cridersville Elementary housed students from kindergarten through seventh grade. At the end of the year, you were "happy to see summer come, sad to see the kids go."

Doll said it was a bit

See MOVING, Page 5C

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Spurs From Page 6C

are available by having the museum in the local area.

"There are several things I have tried to impress upon the director — one, this is not only a local or state thing, it's a worldwide museum that deals with something people around the world have a chance to experience," Zwez said. "We were in the middle of the Cold War, there were so many things going on but at that time the whole world paused. We need to keep that alive."

He said it is important for children and others to remember possibilities of careers and endeavors are endless.

"Maybe we can impress upon a youngster that they can move forward even if they are from a small town," Zwez said.

Zwez also mentioned he hopes Americans realize all that the space program has contributed to

modern day living.

"Over 500,000 people were involved in one form or another from manufacturing and technology the day we landed on the moon," Zwez said. "Through all of that there is so much that came out of it, miniaturization of electronics, heart pacemakers — a lot of technology came out of the space program. I think we need to get back to that."

He said a focus on the space program is now more important than ever as the years progress and moon landing progresses further into history.

"The amount of people that come now, they are a younger generation who did not live when Neil landed on the moon," Zwez said. "Twenty-five to 30 percent of those people think we never landed on the moon — that is ludicrous. It's crazy that people think it was all made up

and that is something else we need to fight at the museum."

Outside of his time at the museum, Zwez drives a school bus for Wapakoneta City Schools District during the school year.

"I drive a preschool route — I take children to the ESC (Auglaize County Educational Service Center) Center," Zwez said. "I find it really enjoyable."

He also runs a small lawn care business with his son, Michael.

"We wanted a little extra money, we both like playing video games, Michael wanted extra money for games and I needed to continue exercising and that's how it kind of started," Zwez said. "We enjoy doing it and make a little extra money."

In addition to being a "handy man," Zwez also considers another activity as his favorite hobby. He takes photographs for The

Evening Leader and has been involved with photography since 1972.

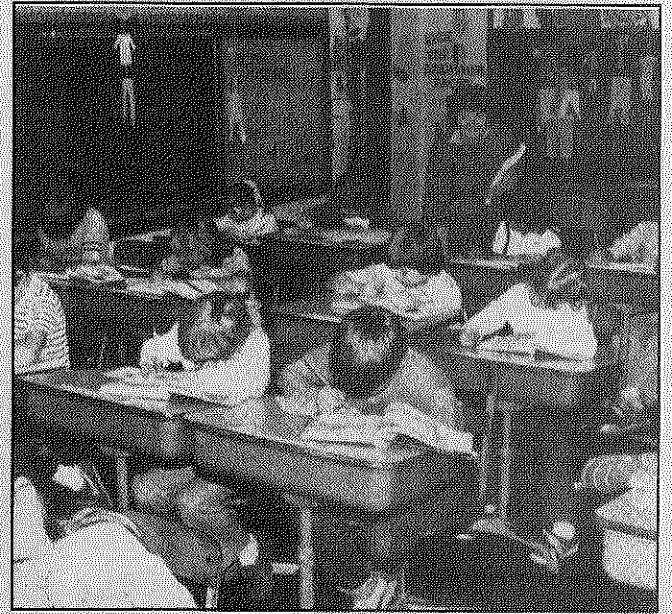
"It's been a long time, I have been working with newspapers for 15 years now," Zwez said. "I was still using a film camera back then. I really enjoy it, for me it's fun"

He said his hobby has gotten easier with the advancements of technology.

"It (digital) has helped tremendously," Zwez said. "You can make sure you got the shots right away and before with film you had to hope that you got those photographs. It's much easier to check lighting, focus and before you could shoot 10 rolls of film and not realize there was something wrong until you developed the roll."

Zwez lives in Wapakoneta with his wife, Deb, and his 13-year-old son, Michael. He also has a daughter, Amy and a son, Josh.

Moving From Page 4C



Ruth Doll works with a student during an assignment in class, while other students work diligently on completing the work assigned. She said when Cridersville Elementary School dropped some of the higher grades, she had trouble saying goodbye to her young pupils..

easier in those days. She would see her students grow for several years before moving to Buckland Elementary, a school designated for all fifth graders at that time.

When Cridersville cut back to kindergarten through fourth grade, the beginnings of summer breaks became a bit more painful.

"It really was goodbye," Doll said.

Her students walked out on the last day and entered a new school the following year.

Doll said that with smaller schools like Cridersville Elementary, the "close-knit community" allows current teachers to talk with students' former teachers to understand how to work with them best in the classroom.

While the new school will have classrooms more spread out, Doll knows the staff will stay close-knit and pull the new

teachers into the fold.

"There are a handful of new people," Doll said, "and they'll feel very warmly welcomed."

Attending the community ice cream social and open house at Cridersville Elementary deepened Doll's connection to the school.

"There were some hugs, some tears, a lot of just good reminiscing," Doll said.

Many of the former students, including the last class that graduated from Cridersville School in 1966, attended. Doll enjoyed seeing them share memories and said the open house was "especially good for that group of people."

When it came time to turn in her classroom key, Doll was surprised by how hard the moment was. She sat at her desk, looked around the room and "said a prayer of thanks for 30 wonderful years."

Teacher From Page 3C

ersville School. Matthew, 30, Sarah, 28, and Brett, 23, moved to Wapakoneta before reaching fourth grade.

"They still to this day say they wish they could have stayed at Cridersville," Eley said.

It is this love for the school, shared by students, community members and teachers, that keeps Eley at Cridersville Elementary.

"I wouldn't have left," Eley said when she thinks of other job offers.

She said the appeal of the school kept her in Cridersville, an appeal that often captures the hearts of parents.

"A lot of parents are upset when the have to go to Cridersville because of the drive, but once they get there they say, 'Wow.

We really like it here,'" Eley said.

She believes this is due to Cridersville's "best teachers, the most caring teachers."

"Colleges send their students to Cridersville to see what their doing," Eley said. "We must be doing a good job if people want to come see what we're doing."

It is for these reasons that she believed strongly in the new school.

"Cridersville people wanted their school," Eley said. "I think they deserve a school. It holds their whole town together."

While her class sizes

have gone from a record 30 to last year's 19, Eley said this is due to an effort to keep Wapakoneta elementaries and Cridersville Elementary classrooms evenly dispersed.

"There are enough kids and enough support for a school," Eley said.

The smaller class sizes have helped her increase time spent with each student, as have other changes along her teaching career.

In the beginning, Eley said teachers "did everything with the kids." Students and teachers ate lunch, had recess and spent the whole of the day

together. Now, she has her own lunch break and more time to get class materials together.

"You need time to get stuff together or work with just a couple kids while everyone else goes to recess," Eley said. "Then, there was no time to prepare anything."

Eley has a true passion for her students. Over the years, she has earned her guidance counselor and principal degrees.

"But I don't want to leave the classroom," Eley said. "A lot of us had talked about retiring, but we're not ready of that yet. As long as you enjoy your work."

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