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Shirley George says goodbye to school

By REBECCA BRIA
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Shirley George has worn many hats during her career at Ross Elementary School.

George may have been hired as the school secretary but since beginning her job in September 1976, she has found herself doing everything from bandaging scraped knees, cleaning up messes and settling squabbles.

George will retire on June 30 after nearly 34 years of service to the Lake-Lehman School District.

"I figured it was my job," she said of all the extra duties she's handled through the years. "I did my best every day and whatever came up, I did."

Ross Elementary School Prin-

"She has probably done everything here over the years. She has played the role of principal, custodian, nurse, mother - she's done it all."

Donald James
Principal of Ross Elementary School

incipal Donald James has worked with George since he became principal of the school five years ago.

"She has probably done everything here over the years," James said. "She has played the role of principal, custodian, nurse, mother - she's done it all."

George, who wouldn't admit her exact age but said she is "too old," has lived in the Sweet Valley section of Ross Township her entire life. She lives on Main Road -

the same street the school is located on - less than a mile away from the school. When she was younger, she walked to work.

"I've lived here all my life so I know several people, so that's one of the reasons why they wanted me down here," George said.

George began her professional career right out of high school as a Licensed Practical Nurse at Retreat State Hospital for about six years. She then worked as a secretary at Charles H. Long Machin-

ery Dealer in Sweet Valley for about five years.

In 1976, she received a phone call from Robert Kunkle, principal of Ross Elementary at the time, asking her if she would be interested in being the secretary at the school. She said yes, accepting the position.

Things were different at Ross Elementary back when George was hired. She estimates there were only about 124 children in the school as opposed to the 288 students enrolled now. The principal rotated through the Lake-Lehman elementary schools and was not always present. Also, the nurse only came in one or two days a week.

That left George to deal with

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CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/FOR THE DALLAS POST

Shirley George, the secretary at Ross Elementary School, will retire on June 30 after nearly 34 years in the position.

TEACHING A YOUNG FISHERMAN



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/FOR THE DALLAS POST

Tim Davenport, left, of Beaumont, and Chad Derhammer, of Dallas, offer fishing tips to Tim Davenport Jr. The 2010 trout season officially opened at 8 a.m. on Saturday, April 17. For more photos, please turn to page 12.

Celebrating a 1st birthday - again!

By REBECCA BRIA
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BECOME A DONOR

For information on becoming an organ donor, please refer to page 12 of today's paper.

Not even bleak, dreary weather last Sunday could dampen the spirits of those inside Michelle Toenne's house.

About 45 people converged on the Highland Avenue, Trucks-ville residence to celebrate what has been dubbed the "second first birthday" of Toenne's sister, Margie Pratt, of Reading, who underwent a lung transplant one year earlier.

At 2 p.m. when Pratt announced to the crowd that was the exact time she received the call telling her that organs had become available to her, the sun peaked through the clouds for a brief moment.

Among the party-goers taking note of Mother Nature's very own show of support were Pratt's mother and sister, her boss from Albright College in Reading, a few of her co-workers, her brother, Joe, who came from Colorado and her Aunt Marie who traveled from Florida to join the celebration.

Pratt remembers April 18, 2009 like it was yesterday.

It was a warm and sunny afternoon. She and her family had just finished eating lunch and were playing on the Wii gaming console when the phone rang.

A representative from the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia asked if she would like a new set of lungs.

"They called and said, 'We think we have a perfect match,'" she remembers. "My face probably got red and everything drained from my body."

Pratt had just two hours to get to the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania to where the lungs were being airlifted.

The bi-lateral lung transplant surgery began early in the morning of April 19 and Pratt spent 19 days in the hospital.

"I had the option of finding out who my donor was and I chose not to," she said. "I do know it was a young male who was incarcerated and that's all I know about him."

The 46-year-old Pratt started feeling ill about five years ago when she suffered shortness of breath. A series of tests led doctors to believe her problems were heart-related; however, she was eventually diagnosed with bronchiectasis, an obstructive lung disease. A non-smoker who always tried to eat right, she was told bacteria called chelonae got into her lungs and caused the disease.

"They told me I could have eaten a piece of fruit or a vegetable that wasn't washed completely because it's found in dirt," she said. "But it's also airborne. It is scary because you think you can't protect yourself at all from this."

Doctors at Hershey Medical Center tried to help Pratt by giving her a series of oral and intravenous medications as well as inhalers. She was also placed on oxygen.

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She's designed her way around the world

By REBECCA BRIA
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It was 1982 and Deborah Withey was tasked to do something extraordinary.

In her early 20s at the time and working at The Times Leader, Withey created a front page color illustration for Groundhog Day, or Feb. 2. According to her, it was the first color illustration ever to run in the newspaper.

Withey won an award from the Art Directors Club for her illustration and gained attention from across the country.

The Dallas native, who chose not to disclose her age, is a graduate of Dallas High School where her mother, Dorothy Withey-Car-

roll, was the head of the art department. She recently returned home to attend an exhibit of her mother's art works at Penn State Wilkes-Barre campus.

Withey graduated from Syracuse University with a bachelor's degree in visual communications and, while in college, completed an internship in the promotion art department at The Times Leader. That internship helped shape her profession.

"I wanted to be an illustrator and design magazines and books and things," she said. "It (the internship) led me into the entire career path that I stayed in until one year ago by choice."

Hired as a graphic artist at The Times Leader after graduating from college, Withey completed the paper's first color illustration. After about nine months in that position, she was offered a job as the assistant art director of features for the Dallas Times Herald in Dallas, Texas.

Withey then went to work as a features design director for The



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/FOR THE DALLAS POST

Deborah Withey, who now lives in Wales, recently returned to Dallas to visit her mother, Dorothy Withey-Carroll, of Dallas.



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/FOR THE DALLAS POST

Celebrating the one-year anniversary of Margie (Zikor) Pratt's lung transplant are, from left, Carl Pratt, Margie (Zikor) Pratt and their daughter, Nicole.



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