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October 10, 2012

10/7/2012 7:32:00 PM

## Teaching what she feared the most

### Class Act

BY JOHN HAUER  
For the Daily Call

PIQUA - Sarah Jane Magoteaux is the first to admit that she struggled in math when she was in elementary and middle schools. Today, the Washington Intermediate School 6th grade math instructor is teaching the subject she feared the most. It is a testament to her hard work and determination. As the sign above her classroom door states - You Never Know What You Can Do Until You Try.



Mike Ullery/Staff Photo  
Washington School sixth-grade teacher Sarah Jane Magoteaux goes over a math question with Jennifer Crusey during class last week.

Magoteaux graduated from Piqua High School in 2000. Sarah Jane Zechman, back then, was a member of student government, sang in the Show Choir, and played tennis under Coach Deb Retman for the Indians. "I went to a Leadership Workshop sponsored by the Ohio Energy Project," she said. "I talked with Mike Nygren who helped me put my life goals in focus."

She knew she wanted to help people and make a difference. "I thought about a career in law or politics," she said. "But Mike suggested I look at those I most admired, and I realized that would be my teachers. He also thought Mount Vernon Nazarene would be a good college for me." After high school, Magoteaux entered the Middle Childhood Education program at Mount Vernon. She concentrated on math and social studies and earned her bachelor's degree in 2004. Currently, she is working on a master's degree from Miami University.

"I chose Mount Vernon because it was a small, very friendly campus," she said. "In a strange coincidence, when I told my mother that someone suggested Mount Vernon, she said that one of her friends had just mentioned Mount Vernon. It was meant to be." While Mt. Vernon was the perfect fit for Sarah Jane, she did spend her fall weekends watching University of Dayton football since her fiance Kyle played linebacker for the Flyers.

After college, she was hired by Piqua City Schools to teach 5th grade math at Washington. "This is my chance to give back to the community and the schools," she said. "Piqua gave so much to me, and now I can return that good."

In the classroom, the always energetic Magoteaux uses a variety of assignments and projects to bring math alive to her students. "I remember when I had a hard time with math, so I understand what some of my students are going through," she said. "I use some of their interests to make math relevant."

Right now, Magoteaux is working to create the 2nd Annual STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) Academy at Washington in a partnership with Ohio Northern University. "My father is the assistant dean of engineering at ONU," she said. "Their students visit Washington and work with our students on special projects." Her students are eagerly looking forward to designing and building a Mars Rover from Legos, and new this year, the sixth-graders will work on a motorized propeller.

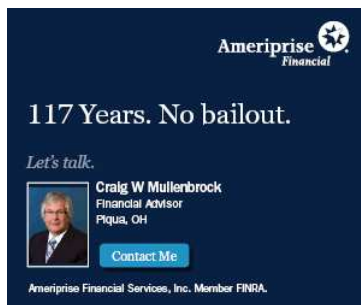
Other engaging projects include math songs and math raps are shared by the 6th graders to teach math concepts to the 5th graders. "My students really get into this," Magoteaux



said. "It's a big deal for the sixth-graders to go back down to fifth grade and help those kids."

Harry Potter serves as a backdrop for assignments and rewards. "My classes are divided up into different houses just like Hogwarts," Magoteaux said. "The houses can gain or lose points, and the winning house at the end of each quarter has a celebration." An interesting spinoff of this activity is how many students have started reading the Harry Potter series. "I think it is very special that students are reading Harry Potter books because of math class," she said.

At home, the ever active Magoteaux enjoys swimming, golfing, walking on the bike paths, and Zumba classes. She and her husband Kyle, an engineer for Hartzell Propeller, have been married seven years. "We were high school sweethearts since 9/9/99," she said. They have a son and a daughter. Libby Jane is three years old, and Si is seven months. The family lives in Piqua just a few blocks from where Sarah Jane grew up.



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