

Being the odd man out doesn't stop primary teacher

Desire to work with people, kids changed educational focus

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PIQUA—The odds aren't in his favor, but Springcreek Primary School teacher George Crickmore wouldn't have it any other way. In his classroom, he is one teacher with 23 third-graders. And in the building, he is the only male who is at Springcreek all day on a staff of more than 25 females.

Crickmore grew up in Germantown and graduated from Valley View High

School in 1989. Much of his after school time was spent working and saving money for college. "I worked at a local grocery store for ten years during high school and college," he said. "I needed the money to help the family and pay for my education."

He enrolled at Miami University as a part-time student. "I chose Miami because it is a beautiful campus, and it has a strong accounting program which is what I thought I wanted." Crickmore juggled a full schedule of work and college for al-

class act



most ten years. In December of 1997, he earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education. Later, he received a master's degree from Wright State University.

"I started as an accounting major because I had a very

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MIKE ULLERY/
STAFF PHOTO

Springcreek Intermediate School fourth-grade teacher George Crickmore watches over a project in his classroom last week.



Man

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influential high school accounting teacher Russ Wallace, and I liked working with numbers, but after one year, I changed to education," Crickmore said. "I found out I liked working with people and kids more than working with numbers." He focused on elementary education in part because of another influential teacher Jan Wallace, Russ's wife. "Mrs. Wallace was my first- and third-grade teacher, and she was very caring and made each student feel special."

After Miami, it was mid-year for schools, so Crickmore subbed for three months at Valley View and Miamisburg schools. In August, he was hired by Piqua City Schools and began teaching first-grade at Nicklin School. A year later, the buildings were redistricted, and Crickmore moved to first grade at Springcreek. He taught 1st grade for seven years; then, he switched to third grade where he has been for the past seven years.

During his early years as a teacher, Crickmore was mentored by veteran teacher Barb Cline. "She was across the hall from me, and she was a great teacher and a great mentor," he said. "She always had a smile on her face, and she showed me

a lot and how to survive those first years."

Today, Crickmore praises the third-grade team at Springcreek — Missy Bernard, Melinda Janson, April Presser, and Karen Francis. "We work well together," he said. "Karen was actually a student teacher for me a number of years ago." Crickmore credits the entire staff for making Springcreek a wonderful place to teach. "It is one big family, and I love being here," he said. "I live in Fairborn, so I have a drive every day, but it is worth it to be here."

Crickmore is very aware of his status as the only male educator who spends the whole day at Springcreek. "There are two travelling male teachers who spend

part of the day here, but I'm the only one here all day," he said. "I'm used to it. When I was in elementary education at Miami, I was usually in a classroom full of females." Crickmore provides a positive male role model for the students at Springcreek.

Outside the classroom, Crickmore is the building's Piqua Education Association rep. He serves on the district labor management committee, the Teacher of the Year committee, and the Building Project committee. "This is an exciting time for us since our community passed the bond issue for new buildings," he said. "I didn't realize all the details that go into planning for new facilities, all the permits, all the different people and companies."

At home, Crickmore and

his wife Karen, a senior financial analyst for LexisNexis, have been married almost eight years. "Yes, it is ironic that I married an accountant," he said. The couple enjoys watching live sporting events and are big fans of the Bengals, the Reds and Dayton Flyers basketball. "I've had Flyers season's tickets for 26 years," he said.