

## Winding path leads to 'dream job' for teacher



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Nicklin Learning Center teacher Kendra Krouskop-Smith helps student Abigail Lemaster in class on Friday as the students conducted a math sorting activity.

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PIQUA — From musical notes to computer programming numbers to 23 five-year-olds, it has been an interesting journey for Piqua City Schools educator Kendra Krouskop-Smith. The Nicklin Learning Center kindergarten teacher has followed a path of notes and numbers to her "dream job."

Krouskop-Smith grew up in Sidney and graduated from Sidney High School in 1988. She was an ac-

complished violin and viola musician with the school orchestra and was an accompanist with the choir. Her talents landed her a chair in the Dayton Philharmonic Youth Orchestra her senior year. "The high point was the Youth Orchestra's trip to New York City where we performed a concert at Carnegie Hall," she said. "Music has always been a big part of my life."

Fascinated by math and technology, Krouskop-Smith enrolled at Miami University and majored in systems analysis. "My parents Sharon and Charles Waldamith and Charles and Eva

Krouskop were very encouraging of my plans and supported me in the pursuit of my goals," she said. "And at that time, I wanted to work with computers." She earned her bachelor's degree in systems analysis in 1992.

She had a successful career at Nationwide Insurance in Columbus and Midmark in Versailles, but after six years, she grew bored of sitting at a desk staring at a computer screen. "I wanted to use my creative skills more and interact with people," she said. "I decided teaching was the way to go." She entered a one-year program at Urbana University and became certified in K-3 education. Later, she received a master's degree in elementary reading and literacy from Walden University. "I did my student teaching at Emerson Elementary School in Sidney," she said. "It brought back a lot of memories because I had been a student there when I grew up."

Krouskop-Smith was hired as a third grade teacher at Piqua Catholic School, and she was also employed by Piqua City Schools to be a Title I tutor at Piqua Catholic. After four years, a levy failure caused Piqua City Schools to ruff her as a tutor. Shortly later in 2003, a levy passage opened up several new positions with PCS, and she was hired to be a full-time kindergarten teacher at Nicklin.

"This is my dream job," she said. "This is my favorite age group, and the Nicklin staff is caring and very supportive. We work together for the success of every student."

At school, Krouskop-Smith has other duties besides her 23 kindergartners. She has car line duty at the end of the day and she has recess and cafeteria duty. She plans the Careful Corners program that is

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conducted at the start of each school year. "It is a week-long safety program where we talk about things like fire drills, how and when to call 911, and dog safety," she said.

Away from school, she is still very involved with music. She plays viola in a string quartet called the Stratford Strings. "We play at dinners, nursing homes, and weddings," she said. "I also play in pit or-

chestras at area high school musicals." She and her husband Bob Smith, a database administrator for Crews Equipment in New Bremen, have been married 20 years. They have a son and a daughter. Morgan is a senior at Sidney High School. She will be entering college to major in music education, but she plays trumpet and tuba, not the violin. Aidan is a sixth-grader at Sidney Middle School and plays the saxophone.

The whole family does mission work with their church, Sidney First United Methodist. "Our hearts belong to Cap Haitien, Haiti, where we have helped to build a church, visited a school, and taught a vacation Bible school class. My husband has been there four times over the years, and my daughter twice," Krouskop-Smith said. "Last summer, my daughter and I served an orphanage on an Indian

Reservation in Arizona. I have also served at a women's shelter and orphanage in Tijuana, Mexico."

"I want to thank the community for providing the means for us to build new schools. I am looking forward to the prospect of teaching our young children using state-of-the-art resources, giving them a solid foundation to further their 21st century learning skills," Krouskop-Smith said.