

Finding success as a principal



MIKE ULLERY/STAFF PHOTO

Springcreek Elementary Principal Molly Hay gives a shoe-tying lesson to first-grader Dimitri Duzinskas in a hallway at the school.



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PIQUA — If you walk into Springcreek Primary School, you may be greeted by a smiling Molly Hay. And, she has good reasons to smile. The fourth year building principal has seen student test scores increase every year and the school earn Excellent status from

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the state of Ohio for the past three years.

Hay was born in Mobile, Ala., but her family moved to Ohio when she was five years old. She graduated from Coldwater High School in 1978. She played trumpet in the band, kept stats for football, and ran track for the Cavaliers. She worked part-time at a local jewelry store and was active in her church, teaching CCD classes.

"I always had an interest in becoming a teacher," she said. "My father was a special education supervisor in Auglaize County, and I helped out at the elementary school during my high school study halls." She enrolled at the University of Dayton and majored in elementary and special education. She lived on campus during the summers and received her bachelor's degree in only three years. She graduated with top honors, summa cum laude.

Her first job was as an intervention specialist for grades K-8 for Ada Schools. She was there four years. In 1983, she married, and she started post graduate classes at the University of Dayton and achieved a master's degree in education administration in 1986. "I was encouraged to get into administration by my superintendent Clete Biersack," she said. "He read to my kindergarten students once a month." Tragically, he was killed in a car accident after school on a day he read to the students. Hay has a picture of him in her office today. "He taught me to always care about each individual and to do my best each and every day."

at the seams with 290 students and a staff of 24. The roof develops constant new leaks. The outdated boiler is unable to keep a comfortable temperature in the building, and failing mortar allows rain to seep thru the outside walls. The building is not handicap accessible. "We really need new, safe facilities for our kids and staff," she said. "Our students deserve the modern, updated buildings to become 21st century learners. The bond issue is truly a once in a lifetime opportunity."

Hay is quick to credit her staff for making the most of the situation. "The Springcreek staff is very energetic and dedicated. They work as a team," she said. "They are concerned about all the students, not just the ones in their classroom." She truly enjoys working with her staff and appreciates all their efforts, time, and talents.

As the building leader, Hay encourages her teachers to try new things. "I've been in education 28 years, but I'm still learning," she said. "There is always something new to try out and develop."

Her success as a principal has been recognized locally and nationally. Last year, Hay was named Miami County Educator of the Year. In 2007, she was Ohio's representative as a National Distinguished Principal. "There was one principal from every state. We spent four days being escorted around Washington, D.C. and meeting important people," she said. "We were given a special tour of the White House and the Capitol."

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The couple moved to Delaware County, and Hay became a supplemental service teacher for the county. "I worked on modifying curriculum for students with special needs," she said. "After five years, we decided to move back to Coldwater."

She spent nine years as a kindergarten teacher for Coldwater, then, she was named elementary principal, a position she held for nine years until she transferred to Piqua City Schools. "I needed a professional change and a new challenge," she said.

Indeed, that is exactly what she got. The antiquated building is busting

At home, Hay enjoys scrapbooking, vacationing and relaxing by the lake. She and her husband Jim, retired from special education with Lima City Schools, have been married 29 years. The Hays have a goal of visiting every major league baseball stadium. They recently attended games of the Houston Astros and the San Diego Padres. The couple has a son and a daughter. Kristin is a speech pathologist with Miami County. Michael is a high school science teacher in Mount Dora, Florida and a football, girls' weightlifting, and baseball coach.