



Every child deserves that kind of dedication and perseverance. — Sally Ellis

MIKE ULLERY/STAFF PHOTO

Sally Ellis watches over students in the cafeteria at Springcreek Elementary School this past week.

Unique techniques part of teaching experience

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PIQUA — The opening of a school year is a new beginning for staff and students. But, for Springcreek Primary School intervention specialist Sally Ellis, it is also an ending. Ellis who oversees the school garden is planning the fall harvest of pumpkins, potatoes, and the last of the vegetables.



"The students come back to school excited about seeing what has grown during the summer," she said.

Ellis was born and raised in Pemberville, a farming community near

Bowling Green. She graduated from Eastwood High School in 1981. She played percussion instruments in the band and was a member of the Latin Club and the yearbook staff. After school, she worked part-time at Friendly's where she met her future husband.

After high school, Ellis went to Bowling Green State University to major in education. "I knew I

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wanted to be a teacher," she said. "In the beginning, I wasn't sure which area I wanted." While in college, she worked in a group home for three years in Wood County. "That experience and helping several of my hearing impaired relatives led to my desire to work with special needs students," she said.

Ellis earned her bachelor's degree in special education in 1985. She has additional graduate school hours from the University of Dayton and Wright State University.

Upon graduation, she married her husband Ed, and the couple moved to Durham, N.C., where Ed completed his seminary

work at Duke University. Sally taught special needs students in grades 6-8 at Woodlawn Middle School for three years. "It was a traditional southern, rural school district," she said. "It was quite a culture shock living and working in such a different setting."

Next, the couple went to Little Hocking, on the river at the Ohio-West Virginia border. "For one year, I worked with hardcore juvenile offenders who had drug or alcohol problems," she said. "It was the most difficult situation you could ever imagine."

In 1990, Ed was hired by the Greene Street United Methodist Church in Piqua. "I started working at High Street School

under the supervision of Tom Ringer the principal," Sally said. "That turned into teaching positions at High Street, Favorite Hill, and now, Springcreek." Ellis currently co-teaches 1st and 2nd grade. "I am fortunate to work with two talented teachers — Angie Younce in the 2nd grade morning classes and Kenzie Kahlig in the afternoon 1st grade classes," she said.

Ellis uses different techniques to help her students learn. "I remember when I was in third grade I could not read," Ellis said. "My third grade teacher Mrs. Close never gave up on me, and she tried different things, and it worked. I try to never forget how frustrating that was until Mrs. Close showed me how to succeed. Every child deserves that kind of dedication and perseverance."

The school garden idea came from Ellis and Springcreek principal Molly Hay. "Molly knew I loved to garden, and she suggested I start a student

garden," Ellis said. "The project has just taken off, and the students get very involved with the planting, maintaining, and harvesting." The students have made salsa from the tomatoes, onions, and cilantro. "The kids are amazed that they can turn the things in the garden into real food they can eat."

At home the Ellis's enjoy camping and traveling. "We planned vacations so our children would visit all the 48 states we could drive to and camp in," she said. Ed works as the chaplain for Hospice of Miami County. Son Nate will graduate this term from Miami University with a degree in psychology. Daughter Jessica is a sophomore at Miami majoring in bio-chemistry. And, daughter Amanda is a freshman at Piqua High School. The family lives on 2 1/2 acres on the outskirts of Piqua. And of course, Sally has a very large garden and a flock of chickens to keep her busy.