

Patton is Class Act with fourth-graders



MIKE ULLERY/STAFF PHOTO

Mrs. Stacy Patton teaches her fourth grade class at Washington Intermediate School last week.

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PIQUA — Stacy Patton, fourth-grade language arts and social studies teacher at Washington Intermediate School, makes it her mission to help all of her students. “I don’t want any student to slip through the cracks,” she said. “I was lucky to have teachers who mentored and guided me when I was growing up.”

Patton grew up in East St. Louis, but the family moved to Ohio, and she graduated from Mason High School in 1983. She helped with the school newspaper and yearbook, and she played soccer for several years. “I worked a lot during high school,” she said. “I had a goal to buy a car, a Camaro, and I did.”

Two teachers took an interest

in Patton, and she credits them with keeping her on track and motivating her. “Mrs. Amburgy, my English teacher, and Mr. Girolami, my biology teacher, encouraged me and my interests,” Patton said. “They were both like my school parents.”

Patton enrolled at Miami University. She earned her bachelor’s degree in education in 1987. Later, she received a master’s degree in the Teacher Leader program from the University of Dayton. After Miami, Patton wanted to gain teaching experience out of state. She looked into the Peace Corps, teaching on an Indian Reservation, even teaching in Alaska.

“I ended up accepting a 3rd grade bilingual teaching position in a suburb of Los Angeles.” It was a big dose of culture shock

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for the rookie teacher from the midwest. “The experience taught me how to adapt quickly and how to ‘learn on my feet’ with each new day.”

In 1993, she took a job with Piqua City Schools to teach at South Street School and Nicklin. During her 19 years with the district, Patton has taught grades 2-5. “Teaching different grade levels not only keeps you fresh, but it also gives you a better understanding of the curriculum,” she said.

Two of Patton’s principals have had a big influence on her teaching and classroom management. Lou Anderson, retired principal at Nicklin, and Rebecca Holthaus, former principal at Washington, mentored Patton during the early years of her career. “They were very positive with a no nonsense attitude about getting the job done,” Patton said.

“I love teaching fourth graders,” she said. “They are intriguing, in-

dependent learners, but they still have a little bit of innocence left. They want someone to validate them, to let them know that what they have to say matters, and that they matter.” Patton admits that everyday can present new challenges. “The longer I do this, the more I realize how little I know,” she said. “I am always learning something.”

In class, Patton stresses the power and beauty of the spoken and written word. “I want to empower my students. To let them find their voice,” she said. The students and Patton make daily entries into their writer’s notebooks. “Journals are a safe environment, a good outlet to share many things,” she said. “The students are starting to look back at all the writing they’ve done thus far and are wondering if they’ll have enough pages to finish the year.”

Patton’s students and other students at Washington are undertak-

ing a community-wide project to preserve the memories of the Washington School building. “This is the last year for Washington, so we want to chronicle a history through the recollections of former students,” Patton said. Any former student of the building is encouraged to be a part of this project and be interviewed by a current Washington student. Arrangements can be made by calling Mrs. Iddings at Washington at 773-8472.

Away from school, Patton and her husband of 10 years, Ron who owns and operates a Mac Tools truck are very active in the Champaign County Cruisers, a car club headquartered in Urbana. The Pattons restored and show an award winning 1965 Ford F100 truck. “The Cruisers sponsor the best Car Show in the area every 4th of July,” Stacy said. “All the proceeds are donated to local charities.” The couple lives in Sidney in a house that Ron bought when he was 19 years old.