



A thousand smiles, thinking outside the box key to education for Arp

BY JOHN HAUER

For the Daily Call
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PIQUA — Walking into room 207 at Wilder Intermediate School, you are greeted with a smile — over a thousand as a matter of fact. Teresa Arp, sixth grade Language Arts and Social Studies teacher, believes in the positive power of a smile. “Some of my kids have tried to count all the smiley faces that are posted in my room, but they always come up with a different number,” she said, obviously with a smile. “Smiles are free in this classroom.”

Arp graduated from Springfield Shawnee High School. The Class of 1979 valedictorian was a member of National Honor Society and sang in the choir. She enrolled at Clark state Community College and earned an associate degree in



MIKE ULLERY/STAFF PHOTO

Teresa Arp works with her class on Halloween at Wilder Intermediate School.

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1981. Her business/secretarial training landed her a job as secretary to the chief of staff at Community Hospital in Springfield. “I worked there for three years, and then, took time off to be a stay at home mom and take care of my ailing mother,” she said.

In 1994, Arp returned to college and received a bachelor's degree in elementary education — grades 1-8. Later, she completed a master's degree in education from Marygrove College. “I always wanted to be a teacher, but couldn't afford a four-year college until later in life,” she said. “Mrs. Joseph, my second grade teacher at Possum School, was my inspiration to get into education. She was like a second mother to her students, and she encouraged us to do our best at all times.” Interestingly, Arp wound up student teaching and, later, sub-

bing in the Clark Shawnee School District.

Southeastern Schools hired Arp to be the Title I Reading teacher at Miami View Elementary School. In 2006, Arp took a position with Piqua City schools and started teaching at Wilder. “We moved from Springfield to Vandalia, so working in Piqua was a lot closer,” she said.

Arp uses a variety of lessons and activities to keep her students engaged. “I like to think outside the box and force my kids to do the same,” she said. “Inquiry based education and starting with a question quickly gets the students' attention.”

A student favorite involves the Iditarod Great Sled Dog Race across Alaska. “Each student has a musher they follow throughout the race,” she said. “Students use official websites and GPS tracking and even email the mushers. Once in a while, the mushers will reply

back to the students.”

Another project has the students becoming people on the Titanic. “The students keep a daily journal as if they were making the voyage,” Arp said. “They assume all types of characters from a stowaway to a member of the ship's crew to the richest person on board.”

In a past project that students volunteered to do, they became famous people in the history of Ohio. “They dressed the part and researched the person,” she said. “In an evening program, parents came in, and the students talked and acted like that famous Ohioan.”

Arp enjoys working with the sixth graders. “They are trying so hard to grow up, but they are still childlike in their heart,” she said. “They are scared to go to seventh grade at the larger junior high where they will be the youngest. We work with them to get them

ready to make the adjustment, setting them up for success.” Arp credits the staff at Wilder with creating a family type atmosphere for the fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-graders. “It's exciting to collaborate with other staff about what works and what doesn't work,” she said. “There is so much knowledge in the building that we need to tap into each other.”

In her other duties, Arp, a Martha Holden Jennings Scholar, coordinates the school's holiday Family Feast and the Spelling Bee.

At home, Arp and her husband Douglas who owns two Dugan's Pawn Shops, have been married 30 years. They have one son, Andrew who runs the Piqua pawn shop while Douglas runs the Dayton pawn shop. Teresa is very active in the First Christian Church in Springfield where she teaches Sunday School.