

November Teacher of the Month

Written by By Babette Herrmann Sun Editor
Friday, 16 December 2016 10:20



Teaching kids their ABCs at Jefferson Elementary School

As Mrs. Lori Trujillo talks about her career as a teacher of nearly 13 years, she helps students fit the missing letters on an alphabet puzzle type exercise, gently asking each kindergarten student where that “P” “T” or “S” letter belongs.

She offers a warm smile of encouragement and positive reinforcement to her young pupils. Learning the alphabet and some basic writing skills are just a small part of teaching kindergarten, said Trujillo, who was selected as Camille’s Sidewalk Cafe’s November Teacher of the Month.

Trujillo explained that learning how to talk a student through these alphabet lessons creates a connection to what’s on paper. As a young student approached her with his assignment she

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had him utter the letter “B” multiple times so he could readily make the sound-to-letter connection.

It’s one of the many joys of laying out a roadmap for the youngest of students, as Trujillo says their “eyes are so open” in wonderment of their environment.

“They say what’s on their mind and they’re honest,” she added.

Trujillo, who was raised in Albuquerque, is practically a New Mexico native. Her family re-located from Illinois to the Land of Enchantment when she was a child. She began her career in education as a teaching assistant, and has done her share of library work, tutoring and substitute teaching.

She fondly recalled one of her first jobs in education, which entailed watching over middle school students who were in a bit a trouble.

“They called me the suspension lady,” she said, giving away a big smile.

In 1997, she made the move with her husband to Gallup. Some years later, she would graduate from college thanks to the GOALS 2000 program.

“I was very fortunate,” she said, of being accepted into the competitive degree program.

GOALS 2000 was signed into law by President Bill Clinton in 1994. Congress appropriated millions of dollars to pay for the education of would-be teachers.

With her college education completed, Trujillo was hired at Jefferson Elementary School where her primary focus has been on early childhood education. When she first started teaching, the

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school was experimenting with combining grade levels.

So, she taught some K-1 combined classes and taught one or both grades until she was assigned to the kindergarten level exclusively.

“I like working with them at the early stages,” she said.

And she gets the pleasure of familiarizing her students with technology in the classroom. A lot has changed, she said, over the course of her 26 years of working in education.

Gone are the days of library microfiche and index cards. Students and teachers are expected to possess computer skills.

“Even kindergarteners are expected to take a test on a computer,” she said.

While being technologically savvy has its advantages in the digital age, Trujillo said she wants kids to not only talk, but to touch things so they can best connect with their surroundings.

“I do agree with technology,” she said. “It’s the way of the world. But it doesn’t allow them to touch and feel, and talk with one another.”

It’s that problem-solving attitude that keeps her moving forward with technological and educational advancements.

Trujillo lauds her coworkers for creating a dynamic work environment.

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“We have a wonderful staff here,” she said. “Everyone is willing to sacrifice and to do their part to make this such a good school.”

She encourages anyone interested in teaching to start out as a teaching assistant or work at a local school in some capacity to get a feel of the classroom and overall environment. Her experiences prior to college helped her to hit the ground running after earning her teaching degree.

To nominate your favorite teacher or professor, drop by Camille’s Sidewalk Cafe, 306 S. Second St., and fill out short form stating why your teacher is the best in the west – or at least Gallup.

By Babette Herrmann
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