



TEACHERS OF THE YEAR FOR 2011 ANNOUNCED

For Immediate Release - February 25, 2011

This year's Teacher of the Year in Salem is living proof that it's never too late to pursue your dreams.

Andrew Lewis Middle School's enthusiastic and ultra-popular 7th grade science teacher, Sherri Shupe, has been selected to represent the City of Salem School Division as the 2011 Teacher of the Year.

"I don't know that I believe I'm the best of the best, but I do strive to have fun with the kids and teach them what they need to learn in a meaningful way," she says. "It's very exciting to see the light bulbs go off."

At first glance, Shupe's life science classroom looks no different than many others at Andrew Lewis. But do a little exploring and you're find a ball python, a rat, a gecko, hermit crabs, turtles and even some moths.

"The students are very interested in living things at this age and they get very excited about the different species and learning about their life cycles, and gestation periods," she says.

Shupe has been inspiring students at Andrew Lewis for 16 years with her bright smile and creative talents. She not only brings science to life, but she also sings the national anthem at basketball games, performs with her kids in talent shows and represents the ALMS faculty on several committees.

"Teaching is not just merely what Mrs. Shupe does, it is who she is," says Superintendent, Dr. Alan Seibert. "Sherri has a teacher's heart, mind, and soul which is why she answered the call to teach."

Shupe is Salem born and Salem bred, but she didn't exactly follow a normal path to higher education. Believe it or not, the daughter of Roanoke Valley radio legend "King Edward" Smith IV was very shy growing up.

"With two younger siblings I wasn't sure my parents could afford college and, honestly, I was afraid of being rejected, so I never sent in an application," she says. "I didn't start college until I was 28-years-old and I didn't graduate until I was 32 because I was afraid Virginia Tech wouldn't want me," she says.

So, instead she got married at the age of 20, had a daughter seven years later and established life on the home front before beginning her unorthodox, yet successful journey to the classroom as a student at Roanoke College.

"I think my personality started to come out much more and I began to develop the confidence I needed," she says. "My dad's personality was very strong and we couldn't go into Kroger without him being bombarded by people wanting to talk to him. He taught me a lot about how to treat people."

Shupe graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Roanoke College in 1993. Her husband, Bob, whom she first met when both were 15-year-old students at Andrew Lewis, works for the college. Their daughter, Stephanie, a Salem high school and Virginia Tech engineering graduate, now works and resides in Texas.

“I try to look at each child individually, and even if they are acting up or not doing their best work I always try to remember that this is somebody’s child and someone loves this young person,” she says. “I work hard on molding behaviors and getting them to be successful.”

“Mrs. Shupe demonstrates daily that by touching a child's heart, letting them know you genuinely care for each and every student, that they will aspire to achieve and accomplish great things,” says Seibert.

“She loves teaching, she loves kids and it shows,” says Andrew Lewis principal Jerry Campbell. “She wants them to be successful and she will not let them fail.”

Shupe was chosen from a list of nominees representing each of Salem’s six schools. All six teachers will be honored by the School Board during a special reception on March 22. The five Teachers of the Year representing the other five Salem schools are:

Fred Campbell – Salem High School

Linda Hall - South Salem Elementary

Lynda Pinello – East Salem Elementary

Patrice Sanders – West Salem Elementary

Donna Wright – G.W. Carver Elementary

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