

Mary Ruth Snelson Celebrates 50 Years of Service

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GRANITE CITY - 50 years of service to Granite City Community Unit School District #9 has not stopped Mary Ruth Snelson from continuing to give back to her hometown.



Snelson, 72, works as a building aide (reading interventionist) at Frohardt 3-4 Education Center when she is not subbing as a teacher or a Paraprofessional, and on Thursday, she completed her 50th year in the district.

"I feel I still have something to offer and I can be a benefit to these children," Snelson said. "I love seeing a child with a smile on their face because they have accomplished something new."

Snelson knew at the age of 8 that she wanted to teach. She also knew as an 8-year old that she wanted to work with children of special needs.

"This is what I was put on this earth to do. And I truly believe that," Snelson said.

One of the things Snelson is most proud of is the fact that her oldest daughter, Jamie (Snelson) Mihi, followed in her footsteps and is a 3rd grade resource teacher at Frohardt.

Since her retirement in 2006, Snelson has taken on many long-term positions, filled in for maternity leaves, shared her expertise when needed, and even volunteered many hours helping non-readers at Frohardt.

And in possibly the most challenging year of her career in the Fall of 2020, Snelson took on starting the academic year as a long-term kindergarten teacher while having to learn all the technology for remote learning,

"Mary Ruth has stepped in to help our Wildcats this year in the wake of the pandemic," said Frohardt Interim Principal Karen Robertson. "She volunteers many extra hours to work with our students on their reading skills and supports us anywhere we need her. We are fortunate to have her at Frohardt!"

She has a quote that she shares with staff, and also keeps her motivated to continue making a difference in the Granite City community.

– *"Don't look at what they can't do, look at what they can do."* –

"Ms. Mary is the true definition of a life-long educator. She takes each student's education personally and teaches from her heart," said Courtney Brooks, Frohardt 3rd grade teacher. "After being in this profession for 50 years, she walks through my classroom doors with more pep in her step than anyone."

Snelson was hired in 1972 as a special education music teacher, and officially retired in 2006 after 34 years of service in the district. She has worked at 12 schools in her 50 years with GCSD9 - Coolidge, Emerson, Central, Frohardt, GCHS, Grigsby, Johnson, Lake, Maryville, Mitchell, Washington and Wilson.

"Mary Ruth is one of those people that is always there, especially when you need her," said Wendy Gunter, Frohardt 4th grade teacher. "She truly cares about the students of GCSD9."

Snelson graduated from GCHS in 1968 and earned her special education degree from Illinois State University in 1972. A former Warrior cheerleader, she spent 11 years as the GCHS Cheerleading coach with her dear friend Terry Papa and 30 years as a special Olympics coach. Snelson was named the 1994 Illinois Special Olympics Coach of the Year.

She admits she could not have made it through these 50 years of educating students without the wonderful paraprofessionals and teaching assistants she has worked with along the way.

And when asked if Snelson loved her job, her response. "Without a doubt! I plan to do this as long as they will let me."