

Downing Giving Back In And Out Of The Classroom

June 17 2022 2:15 PM



GRANITE CITY - Mitchell Title I Teacher/Reading Specialist Allison Downing spends most of her time giving back - whether it's in the classroom or making things greener in our community.

Downing recently completed her 11th year of teaching in GCSD9 and 22nd year overall. She has small groups of 3rd and 4th-grade students in her class with the main goal of improving their literacy skills: reading and writing, along with building their confidence.

"I really love being able to work with students in small groups because I get the chance to know them on more of a personal level," Downing said. "I like having the opportunity to get to know them and help them believe in themselves more. It's always neat at the end of the year to see how far our students have come."

Outside the classroom, she is very instrumental in teaching students how they can make an impact in the community and the environment through a volunteer Garden Club.

"The kids love it," she added. "This gives them an opportunity to learn a skill outside of the classroom and to make a difference. It is rewarding for them, and for me as well. I love seeing them take pride in our projects and caring for the plants on their own."

During the final week of the 2021-22 school year, students completed their final Garden Club activity by helping prepare birdhouses for use at Mitchell School and all of the other schools in the district. Her husband Wayne Downing prepared birdhouse kits for the students to use with this project.

Downing noted on the birdhouse project - "The goal was to give birds somewhere safe to nest other than our door frames and drains on the buildings in the district. It was a joy to be able to build with the students and to see their faces light up when they saw what we were doing. It was a lot of fun and my teaching partner Angie West helped out too."

The students also helped mulch and care for trees that were planted earlier in the year. Trees were planted in front and back of Mitchell to provide shade along with homes for wildlife. These trees were planted with support from the Granite City Cool Cities Committee, Trees Forever, and the school district. Berries from the nannyberry tree will be used to make nannyberry sauce in the fall. The Garden Club also worked to establish a native grass/pollinator garden.

In addition to being recognized as the Madison County Green Schools Coordinator of the year in 2017, Downing and her colleagues at Prather Pre-K/Kindergarten Education Center earned the Madison County Green Schools Program Green Team of the Year Award in 2021.

The Green Team worked to provide opportunities to students and staff centered on recycling, reusing, composting, air quality, keeping waste out of our oceans, and the importance of native pollinators.

Downing received a \$500 check and a plaque for her efforts as the School Coordinator.

"It was very exciting and meaningful to see our team being recognized. Our Title I Aides volunteered their time and played a significant role in this award," she added.

“I feel very fortunate to have had the support of the administrators I have worked with, Eric Smith our Facilities Management Supervisor, the custodians, and Superintendent Cann. I am thankful that they support me with the projects I present to them.”

Downing admits she spends a lot of her own time trying to make things better and greener in our community. That passion initially came from her mom and grandma. She also works to instill the same values in her own children by supporting them in their own service projects.

"My mother, Alice Hunter, was a really kind and caring person," Dowling noted. "I really do love Granite City, Mitchell, and Pontoon Beach, the areas our district serves, and all the kids and the families. I really want to see good things happening here.”

And good things are what Downing plans to continue sharing as she enters her 23rd year in August.