

Like Mother, Like Daughter - A tale of two teachers

by Patricia Dunn Horn
September 3 2015 7:50 AM



Enter the wide, expansive hallway of Ss. Peter and Paul School, and your attention will immediately be drawn to the large, light-filled classroom, colorfully decorated and arranged in a way to spark the imagination of any five year old. This is the kindergarten classroom of Mrs. Teri Lyons who has been teaching at Ss. Peter and Paul School for thirty-seven years. Continue up the stairs and through the doorway of a large purple-walled classroom. The microscope, test tubes, alligator head, butterfly display, snake skins, and a myriad of materials that would peak the interest of any budding scientist leave no doubt that this is the classroom of Teri Lyons' daughter, Katie Lyons, who has been teaching science at Ss. Peter and Paul School since 2010. The classrooms reflect the personalities of this mother-daughter teaching team.

Teri Lyons' warm, caring, calm, creative qualities create a relaxed atmosphere in which young children can feel safe and secure and are able to express themselves. Katie Lyons' outgoing, inquisitive, enthusiastic personality encourages middle school students to observe the world around them and to discover how science influences that world.

When Teri Lyons graduated from Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville (SIUE), in 1978, she interviewed for teaching positions at both St. Patrick's School and Ss. Peter and Paul School. She was quickly offered a position at St. Patrick's but held out hoping to hear from Ss. Peter and Paul's. Two weeks later, Teri received a call from Father Peter Donohoe, pastor of Ss. Peter and Paul Church, offering her a position. She accepted immediately, and she has been teaching there ever since. Teri loves everything about Ss. Peter and Paul School. The 150 year old school is steeped in history; the teachers are dedicated and caring; students are well-behaved and respectful; and there is a real sense of family in the school. Teri states, "I love that the children are so close...never hurting each other. The school is safe, happy kind of place." Particularly enjoyable for Teri is the imagination of her young students and the stories they make up. "You never know what's going to come out of their mouths." Teri also loves watching her students learn to read and write, a process she describes as "awesome." A big part of Teri's job is assessing students for vision and hearing problems so that any problems can be addressed early. Guiding tiny hands cutting out and stuffing paper animals to be displayed in the classroom's Rain Forest, encouraging a student hesitating to read a new word, comforting a homesick child, it's all in a day's work for Teri.

Very much influenced by her mother's love of teaching, Katie Lyons knew by the age of six that she wanted to be a teacher. Her favorite activity was playing "school." Following in her mother's footsteps, Katie graduated from Eastern Illinois University with a Bachelor's Degree in elementary education with a concentration in science and a middle school endorsement. Katie shares her love of Ss. Peter and Paul School, and so after graduating in December 2009, she began substituting at the School in January 2010. That summer Katie was running off copies for her mother when Harry Cavanaugh, principal of the School, offered her a part time position teaching science to grades 5 through 8. She accepted on the spot. The following year, Katie was hired full time and given a homeroom. To Katie, herself a graduate of Ss. Peter and Paul School, teaching at Ss. Peter and Paul's was like "coming home" to do something she loved. She welcomed the opportunity to give back by sharing her knowledge and love of science. Among Katie's many accomplishments was the initiation of the school's participation in the Science Fair her first year at the School. That very year, three of her students were sent to SIUE and won a special engineering award for their design of a Hovercraft. Part of the award was a monetary gift, and in spirit of giving typical of Ss. Peter and Paul students, one of the students donated his part of the award to the school to purchase science materials. Katie particularly enjoys the hands-on activities she does

with her students and teaching how these apply to everyday life. She also believes that science may offer students future job opportunities.

Both Teri and Katie love the fact that the students are polite and courteous, and that they are taught Christian values. They take pride in the fact that when they take their students to places like the Magic House, the Sheldon Theatre, etc. they are told repeatedly how well behaved the children from Ss. Peter and Paul School are.

Teri and Katie Lyons are unique individuals, and teaching together at the same school in a unique situation that greatly benefits the students of Ss. Peter and Paul. Harry Cavanaugh, principal of Ss. Peter and Paul School, says it best: “Teri and Katie Lyons epitomize the values we teach at Ss. Peter and Paul School. They are active members of our parish and share their faith and their educational philosophy with their students. Students who graduate from our school get the “double whammy” of educational excellence from this dynamic mother-daughter team.