

# Tomato professor employs unique style of teaching

BY LAYLA FARMER  
THE CHRONICLE

What can a tomato teach a third grader?

Quite a lot, according to Dr. Gloria Muday, a biology professor at Wake Forest University.

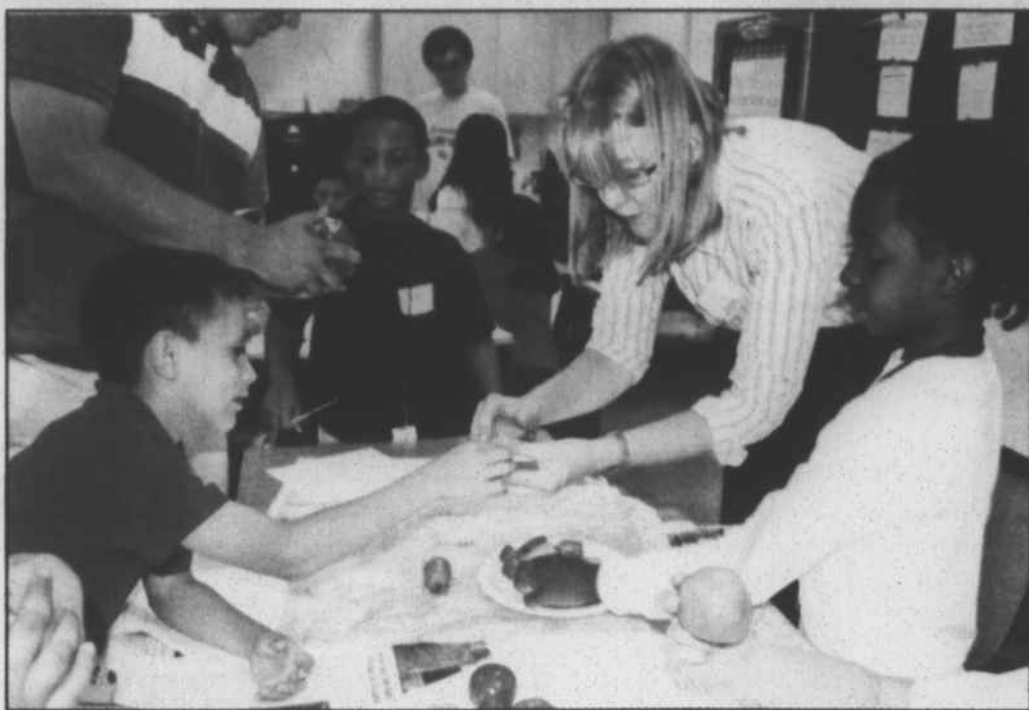
Muday secured a two-year grant from the American Society of Plant Biology last year to employ her "Teaching with Tomatoes" program in the classrooms of a handful of local elementary, middle and high schools in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County system.

"The goal is to get kids excited about plants and food and how plants grow and develop and those kinds of things," she said. "It's a lot of fun. It's great to see how excited they get."

Four schools will take part in the project this year: Mount Tabor and Parkland Magnet high schools, Paisley IB Magnet Middle and Old Town Elementary, explained Mary Jo Lee, who served as liaison between the university and the school system for the project.

"We're all student parents, so I think there's been a great deal of satisfaction for us, just looking at it as bringing science to life for these kids," Lee said. "I am having the time of my life."

Muday and other Wake Forest faculty members and



Dr. Gloria Muday discusses the attributes of a tomato with students.



Marc Luria Lopez shows his enthusiasm for the lesson.

students visited third graders at Old Town Elementary School Tuesday to teach them lessons in biology, using one of Muday's favorite fruits.

The Wake Forest team visited Paisley earlier in the day, where students learned how genetics created the size, taste, texture and shape of the various tomatoes. Visits to the high schools are slated for later in the year.



Kessler

At Old Town, students examined the size, color, shape and taste of roughly 60 varieties of tomatoes, many of which were grown in a garden on the campus of Wake Forest, and even planted their own tomato seeds. Third grade teacher Michele Wepprecht said the hands-on nature of the lesson, would likely stick with the students.

"Tomorrow, we'll be able to come back in and talk to them about this, and because they saw it and touched it and smelled it, they'll be able to walk away and retain a lot more," she said. "...It's always a greater impact than just showing them."

Muday, who has taught at the university for nearly two decades, has studied tomato plants on and off for more than seven years.

"We are interested in the hormones that control plant growth and development,"

she explained. "...We're interested specifically in what controls the roots of tomatoes and other plants ... and how we might make those roots grow better."

If successful, Muday's research, which is funded by a grant from the USDA, could allow food plants to be grown in areas where the terrain makes it difficult with traditional plants.

Taking part in Teaching with Tomatoes served as a lab for the WFU students.

"We're kind of taking on an initiative to reach out to the community and educate kids about some of the stuff that we're learning about as well," said Stuart Kessler, a

senior, political science major. "I thought it was a lot of fun."

Some of the students approached the tasting table with trepidation, while others converged on the variety of plates, tasting each variety with abandon as the WFU students looked on.

Kessler said he enjoyed interacting with the youngsters.

"I think it's important to give back to the community like we're doing," said the Charlotte native. "Personally, it's really gratifying to me to come and see these kids and how excited they get about it."

## Brady

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leave the nest, one by one."

Dilcy Brady has lived with her mother for most of her life. The 84 year-old retired housekeeper at Old Town Elementary admits that she never imagined she'd be afforded the chance to grow old with her mother. But then, "I never thought I'd see a black president either," she declared.

Ethel Brady, or "Mother Brady," as her church family affectionately refers to her, has lived through many great changes in history as well, including both World Wars, the Great Depression and the Civil Rights Movement, but she says the election of President Barack Obama stands out as the most amazing historical moment she has witnessed.



Violet Glenn Madison speaks.

Dilcy describes her mother as "a beautiful, Christian, hardworking lady" who ruled the household with a firm but loving hand.

Brady's nurturing spirit extended even beyond her own children, said Violet Glenn Madison, a family friend who grew up with the Brady children.

"Mother Brady was my mother too," Madison told those present at the celebration. "Whenever we were together, if we did anything that was wrong (and) she told us to behave, we did, because we knew if she spanked us, we were going to get it from our parents too."

Madison regaled the audience with tales of the growing up in the "old days." Brady smiled at several points during Madison's talk, nodding in gleeful recognition of the stories she heard retold.

"We had no telephones, so whenever you wanted to talk to somebody, you'd just go outside and holler," Madison said. "...that was the telephone at that time."

Madison said Mother Brady has been an inspiration to her.

"Miss Ethel is one woman who is a woman of God. If you want to know a per-



Brady with her friend and former employer, Pollyanna Stewart (far right) and Stewart's son, Mike, and his wife, Marilyn.

son who lives the life she teaches, the life she preaches, that is Miss Ethel," Madison declared. "Mother Brady, never, never have I heard her say anything to hurt anybody's spirit. She always has a smile on her face. She's such a wonderful person."

Mother Brady, a great-great grandmother, said she was flattered by the outpouring of adulation, a practice that has become an annual tradition at Piney Grove.

"I'm glad to see everybody. I guess somebody thought about me," she quipped, looking out at the festive tables populated by her church members and loved ones. "I said there is no need (to make such a fuss). I said it ain't been long since I had one (birthday), so here we are again. I thank everyone who's here."

Renita Linville, the wife of Pastor James Linville, said Mother Brady is well-deserving of all the praise.

"She has a very quiet way about her, but there's a reverence there," said Linville. "She has a beautiful spirit."

First Lady Linville said she believes in honoring folks for their good works while they are still here on Earth.

"That's one of the marks of a Christian ... to honor those who have given so much of their time, talent and substance to the Kingdom of God," Linville declared. "(But) we do it because we love her. It's that simple."



Brady is surrounded by some of her great great grandchildren.



Mother Brady (second from left) with her daughter, Dilcy, Piney Grove Pastor James Linville and First Lady Renita Thompkins Linville.

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