

## Alive In The Classroom!

### Teacher Of Year Brings Enthusiasm, Energy To Role

BY SUSAN USHER

Don't ever try fencing in May Moore. While others describe her as articulate, outspoken, energetic and dedicated, Brunswick County's new Teacher of the Year describes herself as a "generalist" and "a lifelong learner," with broad-ranging interests from politics to SCUBA diving.

The combination has paid off in the classroom with a flexibility and enthusiasm that her students appreciate and thrive on, and won her the respect of her peers. Along the way she has also gained a reputation, she says, of being somewhat "controversial" because she doesn't hesitate to speak up for what she believes when it comes to education.

Moore was stunned and momentarily moved to tears when notified last Wednesday evening by central office administrator Freeman Gause that a panel had chosen her from among 11 nominees as Brunswick County's Teacher of the Year. She will represent Brunswick County next spring in regional competition.

She said the designation was earned this year by Brunswick County teachers as a whole, that it's an indication "we've got some great things going on overall."

"It's not me," she insisted. "I am not the best teacher."

During her 18 years in the classroom Moore's taught communications, math, remedial reading, social studies and science, and taught at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

She prefers to change grade level, or subject, every few years, "otherwise you become stale, stagnant," she said. She never teaches a course the same way twice, adding new materials, trying new approaches, seeing what works with each group of students.

"Middlers," youngsters in sixth through eighth grade, are her favorite age level to teach, perhaps because of the challenge they represent as "neither fish nor fowl, adult or child."

Her additional responsibilities as a teacher have included serving on the superintendent's teacher advisory council, the county's performance-based accountability plan committee, and roles as mentor, team leader, grade chairman and effective teacher trainer, among others.

One of the professional efforts of which she is proudest was a teacher cadet peer tutoring and leadership program she initiated at South Brunswick Middle, using a Hilda Maehling Fellowship grant. "You could just see the children blossom," she said.

Last Thursday her students didn't know Moore had been named Teacher of the Year; that didn't stop them from singing her praises as a teacher who delivers, a teacher who has earned their respect.

That day they were learning about chance and probability, and eagerly applying their skills to several games.

"We can learn a lot from Mrs. Moore," Julie Willetts observed. "She makes it fun to learn."

Added Synthia Reynolds, "She doesn't throw it together like most teachers and she takes her time and explains."

Ryan Hewett hasn't always found math easy, but changed his mind this year. "I like it. She teaches it in a way that makes it easy."

His table partner, Keith Bowling, especially liked using manipulatives when the class studied geometric figures because "we got to make cones and cylinders." Students like these are why she teaches.

"I love dealing with young people and seeing their eyes light up when they understand something," said Moore.

Her aim in the classroom is to motivate youngsters, that education is learning, not teaching. "I try to bring the idea into the classroom that people learn when they believe they can and when they believe in themselves."

While her background is in language arts, she enjoys



TEACHER OF THE YEAR May W. Moore leaves her seventh grade classroom at South Brunswick Middle School each day "exhausted, but never bored." STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

teaching math. The subjects share the opportunity to help students learn to think and reason, to move between the concrete and the abstract.

Moore says that while she never meant to teach, she must have been meant to teach, because circumstances have worked time and again to bring her back to the classroom.

The Oxford native was a National Merit Scholar at Duke University, graduating Phi Beta Kappa in 1964. She had a husband, a child, a bachelor of arts in history and plans to return to graduate or law school as soon as possible, but no teaching certificate.

That fall, with no credentials, she accepted a teaching job here in Brunswick County, her then-husband's home community. At the end of that year, she was pregnant with her second child. She didn't return to the classroom then, and became involved in community issues, working toward successful passage of the bond issue that financed the last major round of school construction in Brunswick County more than 20 years ago.

In 1970 she was elected to the school board. Within the week that followed the sitting board resigned, she was sworn in, and her third child and only son, Gibson,

was born.

She eventually returned to education as a career, running Southeastern Community College's night program in Brunswick County two years and earning her teaching certification in language arts and social studies at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington.

By 1976 she was back in the classroom and loving it. In 1979, as a single mother with three school-age children, she relocated temporarily to Chapel Hill, where she earned a master's degree in reading and language arts and her principal's certificate before returning. It's the one credential Moore hasn't been given the opportunity to use in the local school system.

A common concern weaves like a thread over the years through her roles as parent, community leader and teacher: continuous concern about the quality of public education and about the teaching profession. She has been and is a strong advocate for excellence in both.

Before Moore was named South Brunswick Middle's Teacher of the Year, acting principal and Assistant Superintendent Mose Lewis wrote a letter recommending her consideration for an administrative

post. Along with praising her ability as an educator and leader, he said that during the 11 years he has known her, Moore has been "an outspoken spokesman for excellence in education."

After 12 years of leadership in the North Carolina Association for Educators, including stints as local and district president, Moore has stepped back a little. But she continues to fight for those issues about which she feels strongly, including better pay. She's been there, trying to raise a family on a teacher's salary.

Moore also finds the energy to pursue other interests. Since 1983 she's served on the Yaupon Beach governing board and has been mayor since 1987. She chaired her Democratic precinct for five years, serves on the Oak Island Library Boosters Grant Writing Committee and teaches church school at St. Philip's Episcopal.

She draws on that energy, enthusiasm and knowledge in the classroom as she interacts with students. Her classes are typically lively, with plenty of hands-on activities, student discussion and interaction.

"It's never dull," she said. "I'm exhausted every day, but I'm never bored...I'll teach as long as I enjoy it, and I really do love it."

## Students Kick The Habit—With A Little Help From Their Friend

BY LYNN CARLSON

It's Week Number 8, and though it hasn't been easy, Amy Hutchins has managed to kick a three-year, two-pack-a-day cigarette habit—with just a little backsliding here and there.

The jitters and irritability only lasted a few days. But now there's the infinite process of avoiding temptation, staying committed and dealing with the fact that the taste for tobacco will linger for months or even years after the physical withdrawal is over.

Amy didn't go cold turkey. It was more like "warm chicken" with the help of a dedicated health educator and some strong support from family and friends.

First, she set a quit date. Then she began "brand-fading," smoking increasingly milder low-tar cigarettes until she gave up early because the Carltons tasted so awful compared to the Marlboros which had been her brand for so long.

Then came the important process of changing her daily routine to try to eliminate the behavioral "triggers" which remind smokers to smoke. She got rid of her ashtrays and moved the bedside table where she normally kept the pack she automatically had reached for each day upon awakening.

She learned how to control her urges by closing her eyes, thinking pleasant thoughts, and taking carefully controlled breaths.

She got the driver to start dropping her off a half-block ahead of her house, changing the daily route on which she always used to smoke a cigarette on the walk home from the school bus.

The school bus? That's right. Amy is an eighth-grader at Shallotte Middle School. The pretty 15-year-old blonde is proud that she quit, but insists that her case is not at all unusual. She knows lots of kids who started smoking at 7; she refers to an 8-year-old in her neighborhood "who can really burn 'em down."

Amy, worrying a little about her morning cough and



KICKING THE HABIT isn't so bad with the help of peers and a plan, says Amy Hutchins (right). She is shown with Jan Reichenbach, health educator for the Brunswick County Health Department.

occasional shortness of breath during exercise, joined the smoking cessation classes offered at Shallotte Middle School and taught by Jan Reichenbach, health

educator with the Brunswick County Department of Health.

"People don't realize how hard it is for kids to quit,"

Reichenbach said. "They'll be told, 'Well, it shouldn't be hard for you to quit because you haven't been smoking that long. They have physical withdrawal symptoms just like adults, plus they have this incredible peer pressure and lots of stress in their lives from all the changes they're going through.'"

Amy is the most dedicated of 18 students who came to Reichenbach's program, which has whittled itself down to 6 "pretty committed" would-be nonsmokers. They're not there because they got caught—the course is strictly voluntary—and they have parental consent to attend.

Many, like Amy, have been allowed to smoke at home in front of parents who just didn't want them sneaking around. Amy's mom, a nonsmoker, was solidly behind her decision to quit, and exiled the smokers in their household to the outdoors. She credits her mother's support and encouragement—along with her boyfriend's and her best friend's—for much of her success so far.

There have been times when temptation got the better of her, but Amy keeps forging ahead. That's the beauty of working with adolescents, Reichenbach says. Their peer pressure may be intense, but they have an uncanny ability not to let their slip-ups derail them.

Despite surgeon general's warnings and schools' anti-smoking curricula, the pressure to start and keep smoking is almost everywhere kids look. Amy thinks there should be tighter controls on advertising tobacco products. She and all of her friends know how to collect "cash points" to get free merchandise with proof of cigarette purchases. They even pre-arrange to wear their Camel T-shirts or their Marlboro hats on the same day.

"There's a lot going on in these kids' lives," says Reichenbach, whose warmth, accessibility and non-judgmental attitude make it possible for her to reach these young smokers.

"I hope every one of them knows how proud I am of them. I hope they realize how they've changed their lives, and that they're in charge."