



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

No More School Books

Summer vacation's in sight as Union Elementary School students Andy Hernandez, Jermaine Bryant and James Bryant truck away textbooks last week from Debbie Thorsen's fourth grade classroom for storage until fall.



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CALSON

Dragon Tale

The village girls of Wantley Wood sing to a visitor about living in the shadow of a fire-breathing monster during the Supply Elementary School performance of "Dragon Tale." Hugh Brunswick, played by Abdul Green, was magically transported to the mythical town while preparing for a much-needed vacation. Instead, he becomes the hero who frees the townspeople from their horrible oppressor. The play was one of many events highlighting the school's "Festival of the Arts" week. Pictured (from left) are Thomas Daley, Gillian Gregson, Green, Laura Huskins, Arriental Fullwood and Lindsay Wescott.

Teacher Of The Year

Diana Healy Wants Kindergarten To Spark Lifelong Love Of Learning

BY SUSAN USHER

"Mrs. Healy...Mrs. Healy..." Brunswick County's 1994 Teacher of the Year hears those words "five million times" a day.

That's fine with her, because when Diana Lynn Causey Healy hears those two words, it means she is in her element, the classroom, surrounded by 24 young, eager learners.

Healy teaches kindergarten at the same school she attended as a kindergartner in Carol Roycroft's class, and where her mother formerly served as a teacher's aide. She works alongside fellow professionals who were once her own teachers, and whose examples helped inspire her to choose education as a career.

She wants to instill the same kind of fond memories and love of learning that blossomed early in her, in her own students.

"I want these children to remember me," she says, looking out across the playground as three small girls race in friendly competition across the field during recess.

Sometimes something is said or done that affirms she's in the right place, that what she does is making a difference.

One particular day she and Teacher Assistant Barbara Williams overheard a group of students working together, in deep conversation.

"We were just listening to them," she recalled. "One was saying, 'Never give up. Mrs. Healy says never give up if it's hard, to just keep trying.'"

"Mrs. Williams and I were almost in tears."

Healy was first chosen Union Elementary School's Teacher of the Year by fellow faculty members, then named Brunswick County Teacher of the Year by a committee comprised of retired and current educators, community leaders and a high school student leader.

Talk to her co-workers, supervisors and most of all, her students, and it's readily apparent why the title is hers this coming year.

Loving. Caring. Professional. Articulate. Enthusiastic. Constant. Capable. A leader among her peers, an exemplary teacher. Those are the words they use to describe the teacher who will spend the coming year as an advocate and role model for her profession—and for the children in its daily care.

"I would love to go to as many functions and events as I can representing teachers, to get the message out," she said during a recent classroom interview. "People need to see teachers, to understand that we are advocates for children."



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

KINDERGARTEN means hands-on involvement in everything from blue paint to chocolate icing for Diana Healy, Brunswick County's 1994 Teacher of the Year, and her Union Elementary students. Here she takes dictation as a student creates a poster about himself, an end-of-school project.

As Teacher of the Year Healy is especially proud to claim herself as a product of the Brunswick County Schools. "That should say something for our schools," she says.

At Union this year she accepted the challenging, but rewarding role of leading the school's improvement planning process, drawing upon team-building skills and knowledge gained through participation in numerous staff development events.

With the move toward site-based management, she says, she and other teachers are striving to learn new skills and to capitalize on individual strengths by planning together and sharing ideas, working to become more cooperative than competitive, and to assume decision-making and leadership roles that were never a part of their teacher education or expectations.

At Union, the faculty "is together as a team," she says. "And if you look in classrooms you'll see some great things happening."

She points to her school T-shirt and its motto. "We really are 'united for everyone's success.' I want for Union to be seen as one of the top schools in the county and in the state."

After graduating from West Brunswick High School in 1986, Healy earned her bachelor of arts degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She taught first grade one year in Georgetown, S.C., and began work on her master's degree at the College of Charleston. She and her husband Mitchell then moved to Shallotte Point, and she's taught kindergarten at Union Elementary the past three years.

Her former high school social studies teacher who is now Healy's boss, Principal Zephia Grissett wasn't surprised to see her named Teacher of the Year.

"I'm so proud of her. First at her decision to teach, and then to see her growth. To have her here on my staff has been wonderful," said Grissett.

"I had no doubt she was going all the way; she'll be stiff competition at the next level too. I think she will be able to master anything she sets her head and heart to master. She is an excellent, all-around teacher."

Healy's classroom is warm, inviting, friendly, says Grissett, and students "act like they are a little family there, a community of learners."

That's exactly the environment Healy has strived to create. As a kindergarten teacher she sees herself as a facilitator and a role model. She focuses on building up her young charges into confident, independent individuals who like who they are becoming, enjoy working together and enjoy learning.

Her teaching style is "firm, but loving," generous with praise and encouragement, celebratory of gains however small.

"From the first day they come into the school till now it's amazing. You see so many gains socially and academically. They are so eager to learn and so accepting of praise. It's amazing. They absorb so much and they don't even realize it."

"I feel like they all need to be active. I think they need to feel good about themselves, because then they will try anything and do anything. That's what kindergarten is about; it's a readiness year," said Healy.

She asks parents if their child is happy, for good reason. "If they don't have an exciting, wonderful and happy year in kindergarten it would be a detriment. If they enjoy kindergarten and get excited about learning, they'll enjoy the other grades."

In keeping with her philosophy, each week she highlights the life of one "Star Student," who has special duties that week. Students learn about their classmate and write stories and publish a "book" for him or her.

A weekly newsletter from Healy keeps parents up to date, reviewing the past week and discussing upcoming activities.

As a student Healy was "a little mischievous," Grissett recalls, but that may have its advantages. "I think she can enjoy the ones who are a little different. They have such personalities; she brings out the best in each of them."

It is her students, though, who offer the best testimony as to why Diana Healy is Brunswick County's newest Teacher of the Year.

Alex White thinks she's tops "because she lets us make stuff, like these hats (hand-decorated plastic visors to wear the last day of school). We had to paint and write our names."

She's also a good teacher, says Avery DeBerry, "cause she's real, real nice to us," and because, says Octavia Gause, "we raise our hands and she lets us answer and she puts it on the board."

Robby Icard summed up the situation best for himself and 23 classmates. Asked why Mrs. Healy was a good teacher, he replied thoughtfully, "Because I love her...because she loves me."

A Month For The Whelks

BY BILL FAVER

Twice each year some of the whelks off our coast begin laying egg strings. We can find them washed ashore along the high tide line. On careful examination,

the presence of miniature whelks is revealed in each of the many capsules in the egg string.

Several years ago I watched a whelk confined to our aquarium as she worked through the process of laying an egg string. Her effort lasted about ten days and the string was perfect, though none of the capsules "hatched" in the aquarium.

Whelks form egg capsules in the "capsule gland" one at a time and pass them down to the foot. There the "pedal gland" attaches them to the string for laying. The first ten or more capsules are small and contain no eggs. These are used by the whelk for attaching the string to the bottom

of the sea as an anchor.

The size of the egg string varies with the size and species of the female whelk. Egg strings can have 60 or 70 capsules, each containing 100 or more eggs.

Capsules can be formed by the female at the rate of one every two hours. If the whelk is not disturbed and the capsule formation is continuous, the female whelk will spend about a month each year and a lot of energy laying her egg strings.

Laying usually takes place in April and May and in September and October. It is not known whether the same female will lay at both times or why one time is chosen over another.

Watch for the whelk egg strings along the beach and take time to investigate the small animals inside. You will be amazed at the size and development of the young whelks and may appreciate the month the female spent laying the egg string.

You may also learn a little more about the exciting life of the animals sharing the beaches with us.

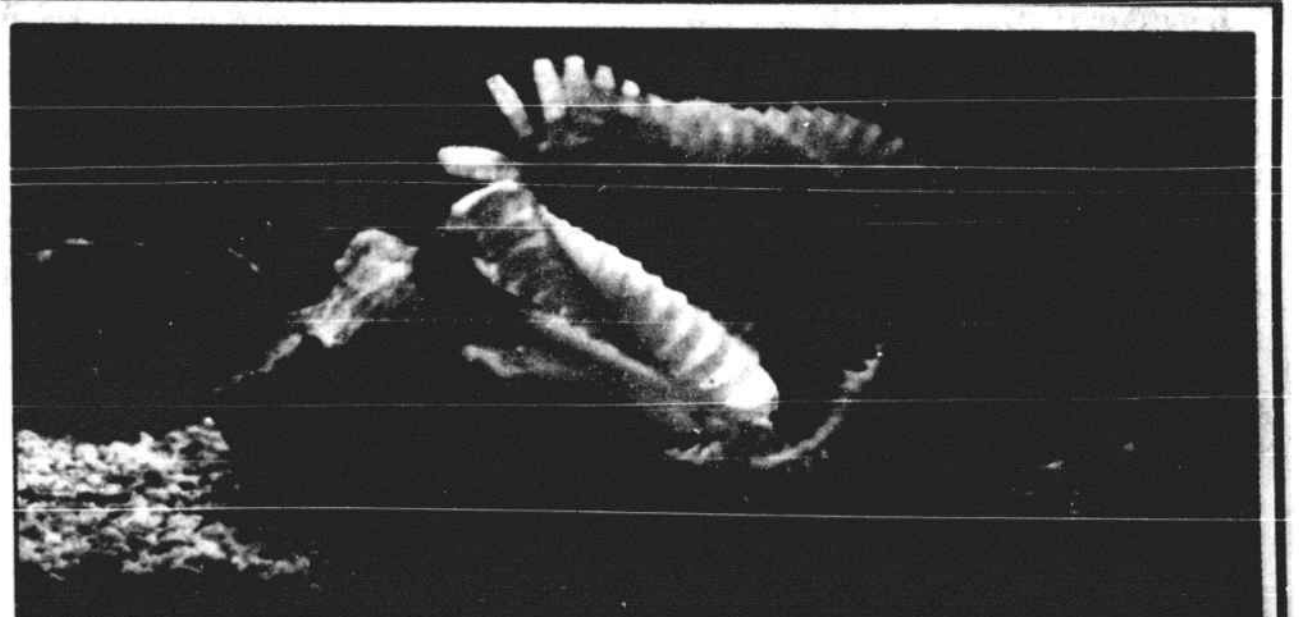


PHOTO BY BILL FAVER

A FEMALE WHELK lays an egg string.