



LINDA WILSON

“The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.”

— William Arthur Ward, Writer

Linda Wilson, second grade and art teacher at Palmer Lake Elementary School, exemplifies a great teacher. A dedicated member of Lewis-Palmer School District teaching community since 1979, Wilson was devoted to each of her students. Wilson retired in 2016.

Linda was born in Garden Plain, Kansas, where she spent her childhood and teenage years. Wilson went on to obtain a bachelor of arts in psychology, theater, and elementary education from St. Mary of the Plains in Dodge City, Kansas. She met her husband David in college and has been married to him for over forty years. They moved to Palmer Lake in 1977. Upon graduation, she worked for two years as a teacher in Holcomb, Kansas, at a migrant school. Linda began working for Lewis-Palmer School District in 1978 as a substitute teacher, becoming a full-time teacher in 1979. She took a few years off to raise a family, returning to Palmer Lake Elementary in 1985 as an art teacher. She taught second grade from 1997 to 2016. All four of her children graduated from Lewis-Palmer High School with both her daughters Kara and Abigail eventually becoming pharmaceutical reps and her sons Abraham and Gabriel becoming an optometrist and physicist respectively. In 2003, Wilson obtained a master of arts in teaching and integrated arts from Colorado College.

Over the course of her teaching career, Wilson accomplished many noteworthy achievements. She directed the Kennedy Center Imagination Celebration at PLES in 1994, assisted in creating the school-wide program named “Let Mikey Do It,” and helped in implementing the Famous American Reports into the second grade social studies curriculum. One of Wilson’s colleagues stated, “Her goal for her classroom each year was to connect the students as one big family, sharing their hopes, dreams, and fears, and celebrating each other’s accomplishments.” She accomplished this goal through a variety of methods. As an art teacher, Linda noticed a lack of cultural and artistic events throughout the district resulting in a loss of hands-on education in these areas for younger children. To address her concerns, Wilson submitted an application for Palmer Lake Elementary to partner with the Kennedy Center Imagination Celebration. Over a period of four years, the students at Palmer Lake Elementary had amazing opportunities meeting with nationally acclaimed dancers and poets. The school began hosting theater productions and taking field trips to the Pikes Peak Center and the Fine Arts Center. Also during this time, the school began entering art competitions sponsored by Crayola, resulting in numerous supplies being donated by Crayola. This gave D38 students an opportunity to engage in the arts at a time when there were limited funds for the art department.

Wilson also encouraged creativity for her students through the annual Famous American Social Students no longer were simply writing a school report. They now participated in presentations with evening performances for the entire family. These Famous American performances included reading, writing, technology, and research, making the project an interdisciplinary endeavor. Students researched a famous American, created costumes, and wrote dialogue to represent their chosen American hero. Many students, parents, and colleagues consider these projects one of the most memorable second grade experiences. This project remains a favorite Palmer Lake Elementary event.

Linda also helped initiate the “Let Mikey Do It” project. Demonstrations from hairdressers, artists, engineers, and chefs enable students to learn more about hands-on types of careers. This initiative provided an incredible opportunity for students to experience careers not normally covered in the classroom and to expand their horizons beyond the normal school setting. As part of the unit, parents, students, teachers, and community members demonstrated their skills in an engaging experience. One colleague remarked, “My only regret is that I never had the opportunity to be in her classroom.” During her years as a teacher at Palmer Lake Elementary School, Mrs. Wilson created an unforgettable elementary school experience for her students.

Outside of the classroom, Linda actively engaged in the Arbor Day committee for over 25 years. Wilson devoted many of her free hours planning an exciting all-day learning experience for the entire school in honor of Arbor Day. The day began with a school assembly attended by several town and school district administrators, the mayor, and a Colorado State Forest Service Representative. Each student spent time picking up trash in the community, raking leaves, and planting flowers in front of the school and at a senior citizen’s house. Some classes also hiked to the reservoirs, identified the different types of trees around the town, and heard from various speakers about solar energy, recycling, and other environmental issues. Linda’s input was vital in creating this fun learning experience that unified the school and community in an all-in effort enhancing the town’s environment.

Although her list of accomplishments as an elementary school teacher is impressive, Wilson’s kind, nurturing personality is perhaps more influential than all of her accomplishments. Students, parents, and colleagues alike describe her warm nature. Wilson is often remembered as being genuinely invested in each of her students. One parent described Wilson’s efforts to place a student in the enriched math program. Wilson did not simply state her concern about whether the student was being accurately challenged but went above and beyond to advocate for this student every step of the way. The student was eventually placed in the enriched program, and his mother expressed her gratitude for Wilson’s actions in making sure he got there. This act is only one of many attesting to Wilson’s outstanding character. Former students describe her as the “Sunflower Lady” due to her warm, sunny nature. Another favorite memory of former students is when Wilson brought them to her home for a study on understanding how a garden works and a discussion of the roles of insects and plants in a garden ecosystem.

As a teacher, Wilson went beyond her assigned role. She engaged the school and community in unforgettable, creative efforts. Her sunny, bright, kind, and nurturing personality inspired students, colleagues, and parents. She was voted the “Most Memorable Teacher” from

graduating students at Palmer Ridge High School - twice. Her outside-of-the-box approach to education instilled a desire for and joy around learning in her students. Her efforts inspired a love for education that resonates with many of her students. Wilson tremendously impacted those who had the privilege of learning from her and growing with her.

By Annie Ackerman