

## *Tracy McCutchan*

Tracy McCutchan represents the heart and soul of Tahoma -- and is truly a lifelong Bear, says former Shadow Lake Principal Mike Hanson. "Tracy is a gentle educator with a confident presence. Thousands of our kids are literate because of her. Thousands more are good people from her modeling. Some of my fondest memories are from watching her greet students at drop off at Shadow Lake Elementary School. She greeted every student by name and started their day off in the most positive way possible. Tracy has made everyone around her a better person."

In 1989, Tracy began volunteering at Shadow Lake. "After two years, and the fact that they realized that I probably wasn't going to go away, I was hired to assist in the office. That is when I discovered that Shadow Lake was very different (in a good way) and a special place." She later became a paraeducator in the Reading Assistance Program. The training was extensive, and Tracy says she has continued to learn new things constantly. "I don't know if my students truly learned every day, but I've definitely learned from them, **every day!** I learned about grace, patience, giving, timing, encouragement, kid humor and most of all 'love.'"

Tracy thanked her family for their support through the years, and also her friends, including Jeanne Lagerquist, Dyann McVay and Karen Roberts.

Karen said it was always a pleasure to witness Tracy in action. "She simply exudes warmth and positivity! Children love to come to her table; they laugh and they learn. Every single day. And they leave feeling better about themselves, not only having gained skills in reading, but even more importantly, having gained confidence in themselves as students. The relationships she builds, the rapport she fosters, and the joy of learning she inspires is nothing short of phenomenal."

In recent years, Tracy has also had the pleasure of working with her daughter, Cailan, who teaches at SLES. "For the last 29 years, my mom has been busy changing the world and brightening the lives of others at Shadow Lake Elementary School. She has taught thousands of children how to read and has always had an extraordinary way of putting relationships first by simply doing what's best for students," Cailan said. "Every child that entered her office knew they would experience genuine kindness, patience, encouragement and unquestionable love. The way she taught each individual student was pure magic. For the last three years, I've been extremely proud and blessed to teach alongside my Mom at Shadow Lake and my son has absolutely loved going to school with his beloved Grandma. As a Tahoma graduate herself, she has had a remarkably profound career here and leaves an incredible legacy that will always be remembered. I will forever strive to be more like my Mama, Mrs. McCutchan."

Another former SLES principal, Chris Everett, said Tracy brought a positive, can-do attitude each day she served the Shadow Lake community. "She is a true community contributor -- if there was a need -- Tracy will step up and offer to help in any way: in the office, playground, cafeteria, classroom. She loved teaching reading to her students and they loved her. She brought skill, passion for reading, and commitment to her students."

It's the students and coworkers Tracy will miss the most. "They say it's hard to turn the page of a book when you know certain people won't be in the next chapter. Well I'm just going to "dog-ear" this whole chapter in my book and hold it close to my heart."

Shadow Lake and Tahoma feel the same way about you, Tracy. We thank you for each young reader you taught, and we wish you an incredible new chapter of life in retirement.