

# Kim Peck

By Randy Garrison

Teaching each student as her own child and wanting and desiring the best for them, was a mantra Kim Peck used in her 25 years of teaching. According to former students this was the case in Peck's classroom, and it continued long after leaving her classroom. Former students, in speaking of Peck, often mention that Peck loved her students just like they were her own, again fulfilling the goal she had for herself as a teacher.



Seeing the light from her daughter eyes when she would learn something new, working with preschool at First Methodist Church, as well as her love for children encouraged Peck to return to school and complete a degree in early childhood education. She is a graduate of Athens State College and did her student teaching the same year her son Arthur began kindergarten. She later earned a master's degree from UAB.

Teaching kindergarten at Crestline Elementary School for six years and first grade at F. E. Burleson Elementary for nineteen years, Peck believed school should be fun as well as structured. One way she accomplished this was by changing classroom activities frequently to keep students' attention. She set goals for her students to develop a love of reading and to simply love learning. According to retired Crestline Principal Joan Grantland, Mrs. Peck was always concerned about each of her students and strived to give them what they needed.

Peck always wanted her students to put forth their best efforts and to flourish step by step along the way. She put many details into the attention she gave her students, including making it special that they were getting ready to "leap" into second grade.

By inspiring and promoting a learning community, Kim Peck touched many lives in a special way. She was soft-spoken, fair with discipline, and considered the needs of each of her students. Peck always treated students with dignity and respect. Former student Corporal Seth Mayfield said, "Kids without a good home life could end up in Mrs. Peck's class and completely alter their lives." She created a family in her classroom.

Peck worked closely with the parents of her students to ensure she understood their needs and how to best help them in her classroom. She was flexible in her lesson plans, knowing that anything could happen with small children and that backup plans were always needed. She looked for innovative and different ways to engage her students with fun,



hands-on learning like hatching chicks and ducklings in the classroom while still meeting the requirements of first grade.

Highly respected by her peers and colleagues at FEB, Peck was a quiet and calm leader, according to Shannon Hulse, a fellow teacher. “She was the “mom” of our grade level, and by example and through her words of wisdom, made sure each of us were teaching to a high standard.”

To help her students, Peck would go out of her way to fill a personal need. She found funds to help a single mother purchase glasses for her son, attended visitation for a student’s grandfather who had passed, discreetly worked through her church to help those who needed shoes or clothes, and even helped find sponsors to fund field trips for students in need.

Several former students mentioned the role Peck played in their lives after leaving her classroom. Madeline Sittason Smith said Peck made a permanent mark on her life by caring deeply about her success as she grew older, moved to college, and as a married woman. Corporal Mayfield said Peck had her students write letters to him while serving in the Army. Former student Denise Sherman says, “To this day if I need her advice, she will not hesitate to help me.” Drew Harper, another former student says, “She cared for you even after you moved on from her class. She always took time to check up on me.”

FEB achieved several recognitions and accomplishments during the 19 years Kim Peck was on staff. FEB became an AMSTI math and science school, Blue Ribbon School, Green Ribbon School, and STEM school as well as creating an Alabama Certified Outdoor Classroom site. Peck received the Crystal Apple Award, the Making a Difference Award for FEB, and also the Making a Difference Award for the Elementary District for Hartselle City Schools.

Kim Peck says her teaching career would not have been successful without the help and support of her family, including husband Jim and her two children. In addition, being surrounded by many wonderful teams of educators and coworkers who shared the same passion for student success meant so much. There was a lot of teamwork throughout her career.

“Words will never be able to describe how much Mrs. Peck means to me as well as many other students ... No amount of ‘Thank yous’ will ever be able to serve her justice...25 years of kindness, selflessness, and memories,” quotes former student Brantley Blaxton.

