

SAINT CLARE PARISH PROFILE

CATHY DEGROOT



Many schools are closer to Cathy DeGroot's home in the Brown County town of Champion. But that doesn't deter the 2nd/3rd-grade teacher from making the 1.5-hour roundtrip drive to St. Clare Catholic School.

"I do it because I love the people here," said DeGroot, who, in her 30th year, is the parish's longest-tenured teacher. "The families we work with are special, and they have a real dedication to education. The kids here are great. Everyone I work with is so amazing.

"I'm just so happy doing what I do. I have the best job in the world. I'm so lucky. Not everybody can go to work and say they love their job. But I do. I'm happy to drive here every day, because I love it."

DeGroot's entire teaching career has been spent at St. Clare Parish, always teaching third grade (occasionally in a combined class with second grade or fourth grade).

From the fall of 1990 through the spring of 2009, she taught at St. Mary School in Greenleaf. Since the fall of 2009 she has taught at St. Clare School, following the parish merger that united both schools (prior to the fall of 2009, the St. Clare School building was called St. Paul School).

DeGroot taught the parents of two of her current students. Overall, she estimates she taught "at least a

half dozen” students whose parents used to be her students as well.

How does that make her feel?

“Old,” she said with a laugh. “The best word is blessed. They trust me enough to share their children with me here in the classroom. So I’m very blessed.”

DeGroot appreciates teaching in a Catholic school. This year her class includes 13 students.

“I get to bring my faith into classes all day long and share that with my students,” she said. “And Catholic schools in general have a family atmosphere, which I like.

“The little kids play with the big kids. The teachers all get along. We have great leadership in (principal) Julie (Hubbard) and Fr. Brian (Wideman). We can collaborate as teachers. We’re not afraid to step up and help each other out.”

DeGroot also serves as a teacher mentor, helping share her years of experience with newer educators.

“Cathy has been a stable part of the community for many years,” Fr. Brian said. “And she has a fantastic gift for drawing the best out of people — students, parents and neighbors alike. It’s a pleasure to know Cathy and to be a co-worker with her in the ‘vineyard of the Lord.’”

DeGroot harbored aspirations of being a teacher ever since she was a youngster growing up in Green Bay, where she attended St. Jude Parish.

“I had two younger sisters and whenever we played school I was always the teacher,” she said. “I just knew it was what I was called to do.”

DeGroot graduated from Green Bay West High School before moving on to the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, where in December 1989 she earned her degree as an Elementary Education major and Reading minor.

While in college she interned in the Luxemburg-Casco School District. After graduation she worked as a long-term substitute in the school district before starting her teaching career in the fall of 1990 at St. Mary School.

She married her husband, Brian, that same year. They live 35 miles northeast of Wrightstown not far from The National Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help, and attend St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Sugarbush. They have a son, Jamie, 25, and a daughter, Taylor, 22.

When she isn’t at school, DeGroot enjoys watching sports — especially the Green Bay Packers, Milwaukee Brewers and Wisconsin Badgers — as well as reading, cooking, fishing and going up north.