

SAINT CLARE PARISH PROFILE

MARY SMITS



Mary Smits loves being a kindergarten teacher at St. Clare Catholic School.

“Where else can you go to work in the morning and get smiles and so much excitement for the day ahead!” she said.

Indeed, Mary said there is much to be thankful for as she serves in her 10th year at St. Clare Catholic School — and 30th year in the building.

Earlier during her teaching career, she spent 20 years instructing in the same school building when it was called St. Paul’s Catholic School (prior to the parish merger in 2009).

“The best things about St. Clare are the wonderful families and knowledgeable staff I get to work with every day,” she said. “I have done some work in other schools, and St. Clare has such a warm and kind atmosphere where there are lots of creative and happy students enthusiastic to learn. Our school does a great job looking at each child’s individuality and learning styles.”

Teaching in the Wrightstown area for so many years has enabled Mary to see students develop beyond school.

“One of the many joys of teaching at the same school for so long is that I know many of my former students now as parents themselves,” she said. “That has truly been such a neat thing to

see how those students grew up to be loving parents that care so much about their children and their education.”

Overall, Mary has devoted more than 30 years to teaching. In addition to her time in Wrightstown, she spent one year teaching at each of the following: St. Peter and Paul in Institute, St. Joseph’s in Green Bay, and Holy Family in Green Bay.

Mary was born and raised on a farm in Parkston, South Dakota. She grew up in a large Catholic family and attended Catholic school for one year before it closed. She earned her bachelor’s degree from the University of South Dakota in May 1986. That same year she served as a student-teacher at St. Agnes Catholic School in Vermillion, South Dakota, for kindergarten, fourth grade and sixth grade.

“I found that I loved the family feel of the school and the kind staff (at St. Agnes),” Mary said. “I did not leave college with the goal of teaching in a Catholic school, but the experience I had student teaching left a lasting, positive impression.”

Added Mary: “When I was presented with the opportunity to have a real job in a Catholic school, I was excited and knew it would be a good fit for me.”

Most of her teaching career has been devoted to kindergartners.

“The enthusiasm of the students and seeing them grow and learn each day is what keeps me excited as each new year comes,” Mary said.

Her years as a teacher have “been such a wonderful career,” she said.

Mary has three grown sons. She and her husband, Bob, have been married five years and are members of St. Clare Parish.

Outside of school, she enjoys spending time with family, walking, exercising, biking, going to the family cottage, kayaking, reading and traveling.