



Fran Woodmansee Joersz

Class of 1972



Each and every child that walked into seventh grade desperately wanted to succeed and she did everything in her power to see that they did- Fran Woodmansee Joersz.

Fran's main strength is her sense of humor. A giggle and grin helped not only in the classroom but in all portions of life. She is a 1972 BHS grad, attended BSC and graduated from the University of Wyoming. Returning to Bismarck to marry her kindergarten sweetheart Jon, they are the proud parents of three and grandparents of five.

The majority of her thirty eight year teaching career was spent at Hughes/ Horizon. Innovative classes in reading and writing led to many lifelong learners. She was not only concerned with academic progress but the social and emotional well being of the students. She believed all students were gifted, some just opened their packages sooner than others. She exemplifies the heart and soul of teaching. Her impact upon students, parents, colleagues, and society is profound as she refused to accept limitations. Through teamwork she earned the trust and respect of her peers.

Early on she took the classroom beyond the four brick walls. In 1988 she began the first of yearly trips taking students to Washington, DC. Many returned saying how history had now come alive for them.

In 1991 she and a colleague orchestrated the two day Classroom in the Badlands which involved 270 seventh graders, seven buses, and thirty teacher and parent volunteers. Outdoor learning involved orienteering, horseback riding, reflective cooking, and hiking.

Fran served for many years as the Student Council Advisor at both Hughes and Horizon. During this time the Council involved the entire school in many beneficial projects. Thirty five council members inspired 900 plus students to be involved. Students created Haunted Schools, Talent shows, bake sales for technology, daffodil sales....all benefitting local charities such as Make-A-Wish and Ronald McDonald House. Students also made jewelry and raised funds for Rwanda kids. She was awarded the Warren E Schull State Advisor of the Year.

In 1998 she was selected by the American Council of Teachers of Russian/American Council to participate in a teacher exchange. She then led three exchanges with kids and teachers to Russia and also to Ukraine. These trips were life changing for many students, teachers, and parents.

She was a NDTeacher of the Year, a Milken award recipient, NDEA Professional Courage recipient after a book challenge incident, a RJR Nabisco China Breaker recipient, and a University of Wyoming Distinguished Alumni. She was a founding member of Bismarck Rape Crisis, Our Kids Need to Know, and Make a Wish Board Member.

She is most proud of her husband and family.