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Last Updated: 5:37 am | Tuesday, August 21, 2007

Bishop Brossart French teacher retires

Hagedorn's 24-year tenure leaves legacy

BY HOWARD MCEWEN | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

When Bishop Brossart High School starts classes this year, it will be the first time in almost a quarter-century that Mimi Hagedorn will not be teaching French class.

Hagedorn retired last spring after 24 years at Brossart.

"I accomplished everything I wanted to in that period of time," she said. Hagedorn said one reason for retiring was to take care of her 91-year-old mother.

ADVERTISEMENT Tom Seither, Brossart's principal of 30 years, hired Hagedorn.

"She was very conscientious," Seither said. "Even when she got out there to double-digit experience territory, she was always looking for new ways to teach - altering things - never really satisfied with her teaching."

Seither said Hagedorn didn't limit her dedication to her classroom. "She extended herself in so many other ways," he said.

Hagedorn escorted students to France 12 times. The last 10 years, the trips were exchange programs.

"That was one of the best experiences, I think, because everybody - their sisters, brothers, moms and dads got involved," Hagedorn said. "Several of my students' families went to visit their exchange partner afterward. It kind of left a lasting mark, and that's very satisfying to me."

Hagedorn also drove the exchange program. "It took a tremendous energy on her part to do this," Seither said.

In the classroom, Hagedorn was always looking for new ways to teach.

"From singing, to dancing, to telling stories and cooking - we got all the senses involved - music, taste buds and the sights and sounds of the French-speaking world. We didn't just talk about France or Canada but wherever French is spoken.

"I always tried to find a local tie-in so the kids realized that French had some connection to our community," she said.

She had Cincinnati Cyclones forward and Quebec native Mathieu Aubin visit her class. "He told us that he learned English by playing hockey."

Julien Leparoux, the French-born winner of the 2006 Eclipse Award for Outstanding Apprentice Jockey, as well as former Xavier University basketball player Romain Sato, who is from the French-speaking Central African Republic, were guests in her class.

Hagedorn served as chairwoman of Brossart's foreign language department. In her 24 years, she's seen demand for French and Latin fall while demand for Spanish classes has risen. She said today's motivation for learning Spanish is different from why people wanted to learn a foreign language in the past.

"I think Americans for the first time have come to realize how important a foreign language is," she said. "Learning Spanish is really an asset, and I don't know another time that Americans realized it was necessary to learn another language."

As for returning to France in retirement? "I hope so," she said. "And maybe some other places I haven't visited yet. It's time to expand my horizons a little bit. ... I haven't been to Tahiti yet."

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