

Judith Winecoff

“You got a spirit of do-right in your soul.” This quote from the popular children’s book, *The Talking Eggs*, perfectly describes Judith Winecoff. She does indeed have such a spirit, and this is what makes her worthy of the Playhouse Great Friend to Families award. As a dedicated children’s librarian, she has been a valuable resource to parents and children since 2001, first as a Youth Service Specialist and since 2003, Youth Services Librarian. With her genuine and deep concern for children she goes beyond providing books and programming; she takes a personal interest in her many patrons. Parents have often said that Judith helped raise their children. On any given day, she can be seen sitting with the teens who return to talk with her. They, along with the young children who run to her desk, love her because she makes them feel welcome and accepted. She gives these children a sense of security, of nurture by a caring adult, and the greatest gift of all, the start to a lifelong love of reading.

Libraries are constantly striving to provide services to an ever-changing community. Just as families grow and change, our community needs have changed and will continue to change. Judith strives to stay current with the needs of Watauga County families in areas such as education, technology, and gaming trends. She models her belief in education by being a life-long learner herself (she is currently enrolled in graduate school at UNC-G) as well as making sure her library programs are both fun and educational. Each year, she takes the extra effort to load her large apple press on a truck and, with bags of her own apples, helps the children make apple juice. She helped to set up a large tipi on the library yard, in the snow, during an event to celebrate Native American Heritage Month. Additionally, Judith truly serves every member of the family. Parents depend on her for suggestions and resources. Judith makes her department a welcoming place for the adults with developmental disabilities who utilize the computer games and come in to volunteer. There is always a box with crafts that need to be cut for one such volunteer who comes regularly – because Judith has made her feel welcome and needed.

“Whenever I go to a meeting in the community, someone will inevitable come up and remark about how wonderful Judith and her staff are. It is literally the first thing they say,” says County Librarian John Blake. “It’s tough to keep a good program going and Judith has always been able to do it. She is mature, supportive and one of the best listeners I’ve ever known.”

Judith reaches families throughout Watauga County, not just the families that come to the library. You can find her or a member of her staff at gatherings that include Head Start parent meetings, Green Valley Family Reading Night, Children’s Playhouse Consignment Sale and the Wellness Center’s infant and toddler parenting programs. She also reaches families with monthly outreach programs at local child care centers. She doesn’t just send her staff, but is an equal partner in conducting these outreach programs as well as daily story times at the library. She also works hard with the “Reading and Rolling” program in which library volunteers take bags of books to children throughout the county. Many of these children would not read during the summer if it were not for these books.

Judith’s genuine care for the county’s children began before her days at the library. She has also served families as an Outreach Specialist working under a Smart Start grant. Working with the library and the Children’s Council, she provided literacy support services to child care centers, Head Start programs,

parents, and public school teachers. She has been on the Watauga County 4H advisory board and participated in programming during Mountain Heritage Days. Having earned her B.S. in Elementary Education from Appalachian State University, Judith has also shared her talents with families as both a Watauga County teacher and teacher assistant. Her interest and support of families is multigenerational. She has served as a volunteer adult literacy tutor with Caldwell Community College and as an art teacher/facilitator with Watauga County Project on Aging.

As a fellow staff member of the Watauga County Library, I encourage you to select a person that goes beyond job requirements to enhance the lives of Watauga County families. Judith Winecoff never thinks twice about giving the extra effort . . . she is a gem in our community. Judith's own words describe her character best. From an article written in the Mountain Times, she said, "I just like spreading the joy of literature, the joy of stories, the joy of life." "Compassion," she adds, "it's small, little things." Her work and her compassion will never seem small to the people she has touched. In many ways, this petite and wonderful librarian is larger than life.