

Teacher fulfilled working with children

BY AMY DUNN

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Although working as a kindergarten teacher at Trinity Elementary School is demanding, Cynthia Brock feels it is gratifying and well worth the effort.

She did not initially start her career in education but instead in the furniture industry, but she wanted to work at Trinity Elementary while her daughters were in school there. She began working as a one-on-one assistant to a special-needs kindergarten student. The following year, she was a substitute for a teaching assistant in kindergarten and knew then that she wanted to become an educator.

"I pretty much caught the bug and I knew that this is what I was supposed to be doing," said Brock, a Trinity resident.

At 40 years old, she had found her calling.

The next year, she was hired as a full-time kindergarten TA at the school and started college to earn her bachelor's degree in

education. She was a mother of young children, and her husband's job kept him away from home a lot, so it certainly wasn't easy pursuing her education and also working. But she feels blessed, both to have had a family who helped her and because she got to be at the school her kids were attending.

As a TA, she was the teacher's right hand during the school day, handling various tasks such as tutoring kids, guiding small reading groups, handling behavior problems and proctoring for end-of-grade tests. She also was required to drive a bus. At one point, she also served as president of the Parent Teacher Association.

After earning her college degree, Brock then became a teacher. She worked in fourth grade the first couple years, then was moved to first grade.

While teaching first grade, she decided to get her master's degree in education and went back



HALEY YOUNG

Cynthia Brock conducts science time with students to explore the parts of a pumpkin.

to school. Furthering her education while working and having her own children who were involved in activities was exhausting. But she said her family and a good friend were a big

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HALEY YOUNG

Cynthia Brock, a kindergarten teacher at Trinity Elementary School, works with beginning readers.

TEACHER

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help in caring for her kids.

"There's no way I could have done it without the support I had," she said.

After the COVID-19 pandemic hit, things became more difficult for students and teachers. It was harder for children to learn in the virtual setting, and they fell behind. As a teacher, Brock would help prepare packets with necessary supplies for children to be able to do their assignments at home.

Also, Brock feels that some families' support of their children's education has diminished over time, partly because parents are overwhelmed with work and life. Some kids, for example, are raised mostly by a single parent or grandparents who don't have time to be involved in their schooling.

Children eventually returned to school, and Brock was glad to have them back in the classroom, but kids had missed developing social skills such as interacting with their peers, sharing and being kind.

After nine years of teaching first grade,

Brock was transferred to kindergarten in 2021. Working with this age group requires a lot of nurturing while dealing with things like crying and potty accidents. She at times would assume the role of counselor, nurse or even parent.

Teaching involves a lot of responsibility. Along with normal teaching duties, educators put in extra hours many times to complete duties such as required training.

Trinity Elementary is a Title I school, which means it has many children who don't have all the resources they need at home. As a teacher, she said, you think about your students even at night.

"It's the best job ever that will break your heart some days," Brock said.

She works to develop relationships with the kids and wants her students to look forward

to school each day. "I'm never going to teach them unless I reach them," she said.

The bonds she has built with students help make her job rewarding. She says some of her previous students have come back and had their picture made with her. She's even gone to some of their graduations.

She feels that the job is worth all her efforts, even if she only makes a difference to a handful of children.

"I have hard days, don't get me wrong, but I still want to come back every day," Brock said.

Now, she has been working at Trinity Elementary for 19 years and feels like her job has been very rewarding.

"I just hope that I've made an impact because these children and these other educators have made a huge impact in my life," she said.