Freeville woman serves as student grandmother

By DIANA LaMATTINA
Journal Staff

FREEVILLE — After 33 years of volunteering at Freeville Elementary School, Betty Postle has proven she's a class act.

"She's Freeville's official grandmother," said Paula Thoma, principal of Freeville Elementary School. "She's very serious about what she does and she has the children's best interest at heart."

Born in 1925, Postle credits her own public school education with providing her with many opportunities. After working her way through Ohio State University for a literature degree, Postle got married in 1947. In 1969, Postle moved to Freeville when her husband, Don, was invited to teach at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine.

Shortly after the move, one of Postle's four children began attending Freeville Elementary. Postle became active in the school activities and was asked to take part in "Friend of Dryden," a volunteer program that matched her with a child in need. A simple commitment to one program grew into a passion to encourage students to develop a love of education.

"My belief in the value of nurturing the well-being of a young child has only intensified," Postle said.

"It's less expensive and far more productive to have intervention and support in the very early years rather than 18 years later, considering the costs of incarceration."

In the 1980s, Postle spent nine years on the school board. Looking back, she said she was able to help keep the board informed of what the schools' needs were through her daily presence in the school.

Through her daily commitment, Postle made herself an indispensable part of the school, teachers said.

"She knows what to do without being led by the hand," said Thoma.

Throughout the years, Postle has been known to make peanut brittle as a treat for a class and ice cream in honor of a student who's moving, teachers said.

"She zeroes right in on the kids that need help," said Ellen Prusinowski, a second-grade teacher. "She's so gentle and soft-spoken, she really knows how to get to the kids."

Postle often takes it upon herself to help bring a student who has been absent up-to-date, said Katie Chapman, a first-grade teacher.

"My kids fight over who gets to go with her," Chapman said with a chuckle.

As she greeted first-grade students lining up to catch the bus, Postle smiled and stated that she has no plans to stop coming by the school and helping out.

"Going down to the school every day adds an incredible amount of zest to every day," Postle said.

Contact: dlamattina@ithaca.gannett.com

Volunteer Betty Postle talks with school secretary Tami Natale as Postle signs in at the office of the Freeville Elementary School. Postle has been volunteering at the school for 33 years. Postle has become a part of the academic day for students and teachers at the school.