

School nurse's dedication to students goes above, beyond

WEST EXTRA

You won't find dumpster diving in Carol Ann Pittman's job description as a school nurse at Hope Hall School in Gates. But, that didn't stop her from climbing into the trash on May 3 to help a student in need.

"It wasn't a thought not to," said Pittman, when sophomore Jessica Myers came to her office upset that she had accidentally thrown her orthodontic retainers away during lunch. "I put on my gloves, went in with my clogs and yanked out all the garbage bags."

With Myers holding the trash bags, Pittman fished through them, found the retainers and saved the Myers family several hundred dollars in replacement fees.

"I was happy," Myers said. "I didn't want to have my mom have to call my orthodontist to buy new ones."

The dumpster incident is just one of the many ways Pittman goes above and beyond to help her students at the private, nonsectarian, school for children in grades 2 to 12 with special learning needs, established by Sister Diana Dolce in 1994.

"The dumpster is just one, big, symbol of all the extra love and care she gives to our students and to their parents, our faculty, and our staff," said Dolce, of Pittman. "We've been here for 25 years and never had a nurse that puts so much time, passion and heart into her job."

Pittman, who is employed by the Gates Chili Central School District, works at Hope Hall four days a week and Archangel School, also in Gates, for one. Her typical day includes dispensing medication, treating minor injuries, headaches and stomachaches and listening to kids who stop by her office to talk.

"The relationships I've built with the kids is what I love most about being a school nurse," said Pittman, who received her nursing degree at Fleming College in Peterborough, Ontario, Canada. "I love taking care of them and would do anything for them. I love coming to work."

Over the course of her career Pittman, who lives in Ogden with her husband, Dave, and three daughters (one of whom is in nursing school at Roberts Wesleyan College), has worked in the intensive care and medical-surgical units of hospitals.

However she says Hope Hall is her favorite nursing job.

"The community atmosphere here is amazing," Pittman said. "It's small enough that I know every student and staff member by name. And, I've learned from Sister Diana that even if you have a bad few minutes during your day, not to let those turn into a bad day."

As for saving the day for Myers, Pittman didn't see climbing into the dumpster as a big deal. She did tear up, though, when I asked Myers why she chose Pittman for help finding her retainers: "I trusted her," she said.

Pick of the Week

The Greece Performing Arts Society will host their annual summer soiree at 5:30 p.m. Saturday, June 1, at Davinci of Greece, 1558 W. Ridge Road. The Disneythemed fundraiser, titled Tale as Old as Time, celebrates the group's 50th anniversary. Highlights include a buffet dinner, silent auction, cash bar with specialty cocktails and live music by vocalists performing songs from Disney movies.

The GPAS Festival String Ensemble, directed by Jonathan Allentoff and featuring vocalist Michael DeLuca, will also perform. Tickets are available for \$40 per person at GreecePerforming Arts.org and all area Wegmans.

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Carol Ann Pittman, left, a nurse at Hope Hall School in Gates, with sophomore Jessica Myers. CAURIE PUTNAM



West Extra

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Guest columnist