

# The Many Passions of Kathy Johnson

**T**eaching is my passion, just being with children,” says Kathy Johnson, Saint George’s Kindergarten teacher for 21 years. “But my passion is also supporting and mentoring teachers,” says the vivacious woman who has served as Head of the Lower School for the past eight years.

When marketing consultants identified “passionate teachers” as one of the key distinctive features of Saint George’s School, they must have had Kathy in mind.

Her connections with SGS go back to her wedding, when she married a 1969 SGS graduate and included a couple of Dragons in the wedding party. After seven years of teaching grades 3 to 6 in Western Washington, she and Jim moved to Spokane in 1985, where she tutored kids and served as Christian Education Director for their church.

Then in 1990, Kathy was called to be a substitute for another substitute at Saint George’s, which led to a permanent sub role in the Lower School office and in 2nd grade. In the fall of 1992, she was hired to teach K, 1st, and 2nd graders in a multi-age classroom, and so began her connection with the Kindergarten that continued, later as the sole K teacher, for more than two decades. Her teaching principles never wavered: “Teach each child to feel good about their uniqueness and make learning a passionate desire.”

The proof of her success was evident each fall starting in 2005 when seniors who had started in her Kindergarten class returned for the Thanksgiving Feast. While they marveled at Kathy’s photos of themselves as five-year-olds, she took pride in the accomplishments of these fine young adults.

Kathy also saw her gifts reaching beyond a single classroom—exercising leadership skills, earning a Masters in guidance and counseling before she was married, and completing Whitworth’s Principal Certification courses. She even was an adjunct professor at EWU’s night program for teachers. So when she moved up to Head of the Lower School in 2013, she was ready for the new responsibilities.

“She has led with grace and respect and built a strong faculty culture during her tenure,” says current Head of School Jamie Tender. “Kathy also has a wealth of experience that she contributes to the K-12 organization as a key member of the Administrative team.”

“Every day I get in my car and love coming to work,” she says. “It has been an ultimate pleasure to work with the committed professionals and life-long learners in the Lower School. They bring out the best in each other and in their students. We share a common bond—a passion for teaching and developing the potential of each child. They are an inspiration to me!”

“I always said, the day I didn’t want to come to work, I’d exit. That day never came.” But the time did come when Kathy wanted to pursue other passions—spending time with her children, grandchildren, and twin sister, Karen. Plus a visit to Kenya, bicycle trips through Europe, and the historic cities of Savannah and Charleston are on her bucket list.

As she retires, Kathy knows the Lower School will be in capable hands. “Fourth-grade teacher Rick Petrini did his Administrative Internship with me the past year. He will go the extra mile to support these teachers as they continue to make learning fun and engaging for their students.”

So farewell, Kathy. Your students, teachers, parents and colleagues at Saint George’s wish you joy as you continue to pursue your many passions!

— John Carter, Communications Director

# Kathy's Teachers Share the Love

**"I've worked with Kathy for 18 years,** and I think she is amazing. Through good times and bad, she maintains energy, enthusiasm, and a positive, can-do attitude. As an administrator, Kathy is a tireless advocate for her faculty. She is always ready to listen and to problem solve. Kathy supports teachers and fosters a family-like community in the Lower School. She often volunteers to cover classes or break duties to help teachers out. Kathy cares deeply about each of us, and it has been such a joy to work with her over the years. She is irreplaceable, and she will be deeply missed."

**- Jennifer Davenport, LS Art**

**"I can't imagine a Lower School**

without Kathy Johnson in it. From my son Max's first day of Kindergarten to the Thanksgiving Feast as a senior in Kathy's classroom, she's been a part of his life. As a parent, as a colleague, and as a friend, Kathy's no nonsense, upbeat presence has helped me through every parenting and teaching milestone. Kathy has always modeled being a problem solver, taking care of yourself and family first, and being an energetic, positive teacher for every child that comes through our classrooms. No one advocates more strongly for her students and faculty. Kathy is a gifted teacher and administrator who intuitively knows what her teachers, students, and parents need to be their absolute best selves. My family and I have been truly blessed and enriched by having Kathy in our lives."

**- Denie Inman, 3rd Grade**

**"Kathy is one of a kind. She always** goes above and beyond for her teachers and the students of SGS. Kathy was always hands-on with everything from the learning of students to the professional development of staff, and even in planning of the LS events. Not only does Kathy care about the teachers as faculty and the students as learners, she cares about their well-being. Kathy knows about lives outside of school which shows her dedica-

tion to getting to know her staff on a personal level as well. Thank you for your mentorship and amazing leadership, Kathy. We will miss you!"

**- MacKenzie Crittenden, 5th Grade**

**"When looking at schools for my kids,**

I met both Erika and Kathy on a kindergarten visitation day. Both were so welcoming and inviting that I had the immediate knowledge that SGS was the place for any child, and that they would nurture my kids and enable them to develop a love for learning. Following this, I got to know Kathy as both a parent and occasional substitute over the next couple years, during which time my initial impression was further reinforced as Kathy has truly been the heartbeat of the Lower School. After becoming a full-time teacher at SGS, I have generated a whole new appreciation of her and the job she does. She is positive, supportive, and encouraging to her teachers yet also balances the demands from parents and challenges of being the leader of the Lower School. She is a tireless leader who I am proud to have worked for these past several years, and I will be sad to see her go, although I am incredibly excited for her starting this next chapter of her life."

**- Sarah Henrickson, 2nd Grade**

**"Kathy knows how important it is**

to balance professional life and personal life. As a leader, she never tires of hearing about the children and family occasions which brighten the days of her staff members outside of school. At school, Kathy is a true servant leader. She is always at the ready to pitch in and make things work in the face of any obstacles or scheduling conflicts. Ever since becoming our principal, Kathy has never lost sight of her roots in teaching. It's always fun to see students of various grade levels sitting in her office, reading stories they have self-authored in class. That's just one of the myriad ways Kathy stays connected with the students and knits all of the Lower School together."

**- Rick Petrini, 4th Grade**

**"I would like to thank Kathy for always having a smile to brighten our day. She is an incredibly positive leader, no matter the situation."**

**- Jennifer Ward, LS Physical Ed.**

**"Kathy is one of the most positive people I know. She always looks for the best in others and brings her 'can do' attitude to all situations. I appreciate her deep care and love for all of the Lower School teachers, students, and families. The relationships she has formed will be the legacy she is leaving behind."**

**- Erika Mullins, Kindergarten**

**"Kathy has always cared deeply about the teachers and staff and always has our best interests, as well as the best outcome for the students, in mind when she makes decisions for the Lower School. She will be truly missed by me, her 'right hand'."**

**- Melanie Gee, LS Admin. Assistant**