



## The All-American Teacher

By: Beth Weatherford

When I think of an “All-American” teacher, I think of my friend and co-worker, Captain Susan Parker, as a hero in and out of the classroom. She is a combination of an awesome teacher and a patriot serving our country! She is a talented teacher in the classroom in the area of hands-on activities for the children. She is a super-organized leader, in the field of analyzing data for the purpose of helping students show academic progress. She is strictly an unordinary and fascinating communicator with students, teachers, and administrators. Her sense of humor enables her to get along with everyone.

The reason I know so much about her is because we have known each other and taught school together for about fourteen years. We taught on the same fifth grade team when we first met. We attended many school conferences together. We graduated and received our Masters Degree at the same time. We worked together four years ago when she was Academic Coach, and now we both teach in the Lakewood Middle School.

I will never forget her building a compost machine out of barrels, in which the students learned how to make rich soil using scraps from the cafeteria. They also put sticks, banana peels, and paper into the machine daily, mixing the decomposing items and other compostable materials. Regular measurements of temperature and moisture were taken to ensure the ideal recipe for making compost efficiently. This compost was used as soil enrichment when potting flowers in the spring. Another time, I recall her teaching her class how to create homemade hodometers out of yardsticks and five-gallon bucket lids recycled

from the lunchroom. The kids used these devices to measure distances in the school parking lot and playground. Then again, she invited my class to go out to the wooded area on campus with tape measures, paper, and pencils to figure circumference to determine the diameter of various trees. Like the saying goes, "There wasn't much she didn't think of." We also team taught low-achieving math students. We would take turns teaching, tutoring, and assessing during each class period. It was rewarding to work together so effectively as the students showed improvement.

She and her husband started an after-school program for students in grades second through eighth. It was called the "Adventure Club." They would have experts in various fields to demonstrate their crafts and have students participate in related hands-on experiences. Some of these events consisted of riding a mule and wagon logging team, carving pumpkins, building survival shelters in the woods and painting their faces camo, planting and harvesting a garden, and then selling their fresh vegetable products to the community, dissecting fresh-water mussels and owl pellets, curing a country ham, learning how to fry catfish, studying map reading and land navigation using a compass followed by written instructions on how to find pretend hidden treasures, wiring electrical circuits, rebuilding small engines provided by a local manufacturer, building bird feeders and houses, cutting a hiking trail on the school campus, making homemade plastic, and other outdoor activities. Students never can tell what "voice" might come out of that woman next! It might be the voice of Barney, the purple dinosaur; Steve Irwin, The Crocodile Hunter; a surfer dude, "valley girl," or the ordinary game show host. These accents make everyone laugh,

but mostly, they hold the students' attentions continuously. They are dumbfounded at all of her amazing arts of communication.

It is obvious! She has and still makes an enormous difference at our school, and mostly, in the lives of many of our young folks! They respect her for her vast amounts of talent and intelligence, her humor, and her love for all of them in the classroom.

One area in which Mrs. Parker is notable is organization. As a previous academic coach and presently a classroom teacher, she has a gift for studying and working with data to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the children in order to develop individual student improvement plans.

Last, but definitely not least, is her love for our country! She has been a member of the Tennessee Army National Guard over the past eight years. She serves as an Engineer officer. She was deployed for Hurricane Katrina relief, assisted Border Patrol in stemming the trafficking of drugs and people across the Arizona-Mexico border, and Operation- Iraqi Freedom last year. She is undeniably one of the most eccentric examples for our younger people, especially, the students who come in contact with Captain Parker on a daily basis. She demonstrates patriotism to the children and portrays self-discipline by working out faithfully to stay in tip-top shape. She communicates news from around the world to her students. She advocates her love for our country. She tells real world stories comparing the school lives and materialism of American and Iraqi students. Finally, she is a world- class example of teaching the children the importance of being responsible for their future lives.

Whether it be Mrs. or Captain Susan Parker, I can honestly say she is an ICON for student education in or out of the classroom.

Because of her integrity and character, I wrote this poem in her honor.

ALL-AMERICAN TEACHER

SUSAN PARKER YOU'RE OUR FRIEND  
TEACHER SOLDIER TO THE END  
AS FOR TEACHING YOU'RE THE ONE  
STUDENTS SAY IS FULL OF FUN  
YOU'RE THE BEST YOU'RE REALLY COOL  
WHERE EAGLES SOAR AT LAKEWOOD SCHOOL

CAPTAIN PARKER TRIED AND TRUE  
STANDING FOR RED, WHITE, AND BLUE  
AS FOR LEADING YOU'RE THE ONE  
SOLDIERS SAY CAN'T BE OUTDONE  
YOU'RE THE BEST YOU NEVER YIELD  
WHERE TROOPS SERVE ON THE BATTLEFIELD



**Dan Tollett, Beth Weatherford, Susan Parker, Kristi Coleman**