



To Tell The Truth

By: Tammy Woolbright

"To Tell the Truth is a famous American game show produced in the 1950's. This show featured contestants with unusual occupations or experiences, and they were sworn to tell the truth throughout the questioning experience. As I think of my fellow colleague, Mrs. Karen Holder, I think of how Ms. Karen would have answered certain questions about her career as an educator. Regardless of the questions, Ms. Karen's answers would have been truthful but full of humility.

Pertinent questions might have included: How old were you when you graduated high school? [15] Did your mother drive you to college? Yes How old were you when you began your first teaching job? [19] How many years did you teach 1st grade ? 19 How many years were you Supervisor of Instruction? [17] Did you help write and oversee grants that impacted the students of Jackson County? [Yes] Are you aware that many teachers have been greatly impacted by your wealth of knowledge, kindness, generosity, and desire to help others? [No] I am confident that Ms. Karen did not truly realize the impact and difference she made for the Jackson County School System for 37 years.

Therefore I would like "To Tell the Truth". Ms. Karen Holder has greatly impacted the students, faculty, and staff of Jackson County. Ms. Karen was an excellent first grade teacher. She has numerous students who share wonderful memories about being in Ms. Karen's class. Ms. Karen's #1 passion as a teacher and administrator was the teaching

of reading. She loved to teach a child to read and see the smile on their face as the world opened up to them. Ms. Karen helped write numerous grants that impacted the system monetarily. Some of the grants included Drop-Out Prevention and Reading First. Both grants touched lives and made a difference for students and teachers. Recently, the system received a positive behavior system grant that she wrote this past summer. Her legacy continues. Personally, Ms. Karen taught me so much. She always had words of wisdom in the toughest of situations with the greatest empathy. I was awed by her ability to speak eloquently about education and her strong advocacy of our school system. Ms. Karen believed in me. How could I doubt myself? Ms. Karen believed, therefore I wanted to strive to live up to her expectations and confidence. Although Ms. Karen was very positive, she did not hesitate to tactfully correct a situation or point out areas to strengthen. She epitomized strong leadership and supervision.

Unfortunately in August, prior to school starting, Jackson County Schools suffered tragedy. Ms. Karen passed away from complications of back surgery. As a school system, we were in shock, grief stricken and unsure. Ms. Karen was a key foundational block to our school system. She was a constant, faithful pillar in our lives. Stories were shared about how Ms. Karen made a difference in our lives. One could hear her first grade retired buddies talking about the "good ole days" or new hires who had experienced her sincere and well thought out questions in the interview process and finally, veteran colleagues tearing up and saying "What will we do without Ms. Karen?"

It was in this tragic moment that Ms. Karen taught me the greatest lesson. Life is short. We have today and there is no promise of tomorrow. Ms. Karen's life was too short in our eyes, but her life is not defined by the number of years, but by the number of lives changed and touched. Thank you, Ms. Karen, for touching my life and thank you for helping us to remember to be the best educator we can be TODAY. THAT IS THE TRUTH!



Tammy Woolbright and Dan Tollett