



MORTON
UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 709

May 5, 2021

During Teacher Appreciation Week, remembering one of the best

It's Teacher Appreciation Week, which may have a bit more meaning this year, as it comes during a global pandemic that has had our teachers stepping up like perhaps never before.

From changed working conditions to the added demands placed upon them between in-person and remote instruction, they have risen to the challenges placed before them. Teaching is unique among many professions in that it is very much a calling, something its practitioners are compelled to do even when the circumstances make it difficult.

This week, we also pause to remember a popular teacher in Morton District 709 who went the extra mile for her students, and who left us all too soon. Longtime Jefferson Elementary School teacher Margaret Shafer lost her battle with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), a progressive neurological disease more commonly known as Lou Gehrig's Disease, in early April. She was 60.

Ms. Shafer taught in Morton District 709 for 38 years, nearly 30 of those at Jefferson. She taught special



education, first and third grades, and stayed in the classroom until her illness wouldn't allow it any longer. She retired in December 2020, before COVID really hit, and passed away just four months later.

Ms. Shafer left an indelible mark on countless students, for whom she was a tireless advocate. She was a mentor and friend to her peers. And she left behind many admirers.

One was Jefferson Principal Kate Wyman.

"She made sure to provide whatever the child needed to be successful as a student," Ms. Wyman told the Morton School Board recently. "Her students remember how she would sing songs to help them remember tricky material, take them outside to read under the trees ... make them feel welcome on their first day of school.

"Her colleagues remember her for always being a good listener ... inviting other into her classroom, sharing her thoughts, and collaborating with others.

"Margaret was a leader and a learner ... She is already dearly missed."

Teresa Oaks, who teaches second grade at Jefferson, dedicated a poem to her former colleague that reads, in part:

"Learning from Margaret was easy
She listened first, then she spoke
Whether running her morning meeting
Or discussing issues with a friend,
You always felt heard and valued
And she'd offer her time again

"She gave all her students a gift
By advocating for individual needs
She saw the whole child as important.
She was a special treasure, indeed ..."

Teaching is a noble profession, in part because of people like Margaret Shafer. One way to say “thank you” is through a donation to the ALS Foundation, which can be done [here](#), as we celebrate all of our teachers this week.

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