

# ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

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## **Batesville school counselor practices what she preaches (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)**

BATESVILLE — Gentle knocks on the door are routine in Regina Forehand’s office at West Magnet Elementary School.

The door stays closed to keep the heat in, but as a sign on the door explains, visitors are always welcome. Students stop by to ask questions, request favors and share feelings, disappointments and successes.

“In my job, I get to do a lot of listening,” Forehand said.

So much listening goes on in her two-room office each day that Forehand laughs a little when the questions are sent in her own direction.

“I always have people come in talking about them,” Forehand said. “I’m not used to talking about myself in here.”

Born and raised in Batesville, Forehand attended Arkansas State University, graduating in 1996 with a degree in special education. In 1999, she received a degree in counseling.

Forehand first joined the Batesville School District as a special-education and English teacher at West Magnet and the junior high, before taking on the counselor role at West Magnet full time. She’s now been working in the district for 12 years.

Hanging on the wall in Forehand’s office are papers she wrote when she was a student at West. The school has gotten much bigger since she attended, but to Forehand, the halls still smell the same.

Each day brings new conversations with students. Forehand meets with teachers and parents and teaches guidance classes to small groups.

“We work a lot on listening skills and on reflective listening,” Forehand said. “They learn to think about the other person and what they’re thinking — how to be in the moment with the other person and not just thinking of what they should say next.”

As a visual- and performing-arts magnet school, West Magnet draws students with creative energy, and Forehand uses activities such as role playing and script writing to engage students to learn about emotions and communication. Forehand said her role as school counselor allows her to listen and help with students’ problems in a way she wasn’t able to as a teacher with a whole classroom of students.

In addition to daily counseling work, Forehand serves as the sponsor for Tutors Inc., a program she founded last year. This year, 20 sixth-graders from the school have gone through training to tutor kindergartners through third-graders.

“They help with math facts and practice fluency reading,” Forehand said. “They meet with the other students two days each week, and they’ll come back with all kinds of stories. They really learn what it takes to be a good student.”

The group runs like a business, with students attending meetings, filling out self-evaluations and looking for ways to improve their work. The tutors are also responsible for keeping their own grades up.

“They’ll come in and say, ‘Can I check my grades?’ or tell me how well they did on a test,” Forehand said.

When it came time to pick which students would be a part of Tutors Inc. this year, Forehand said she looked specifically for students who weren’t involved in other activities.

“The students last year came up with the logo and the name for the group,” Forehand said. “They all take it very seriously.”

The group got partially off the ground last school year, and a grant from Citizens Bank in November has allowed the program to continue. Forehand said she has already seen benefits for both the tutors and their young students.

“We have a lot of Hispanic students at our school, and one of our sixth-graders who is fluent in Spanish is paired with a kindergartner who also speaks Spanish,” Forehand said. “They can work in both languages together, and it’s been great to watch.”

When talking about her work, Forehand is quick to talk about the support she’s received that has helped her become the person she is today.

“My story has been one of accepting God’s forgiveness and grace and learning to pass that along to others,” Forehand said. “I’m thankful for those who’ve loved me right where I am and taken me far beyond where I ever thought I could go.”

Forehand said she has learned many lessons from the students at West over the years, and working with them is “an honor.”

“Kids are always very open and very honest,” Forehand said. “They teach you about loving and accepting.”

After a young West student, Zackerie Wilson, died last year, Forehand said she and the school staff have remembered Zackerie and “try to love and hug our students just a little more” in his memory.

“There are children and families trying to survive in the middle of great personal suffering,” Forehand said. “I don’t ever want one of those people to come through our school without feeling care and comfort. ... I want to be a safe place for those who are hurting, and encourage and strengthen those who are doing well.”

Forehand has taken one lesson she teaches her students especially to heart. When she would tell students to always try to find a way to keep their dreams alive and find ways to have fun, they’d ask her, “What do you do?”

So, she did something. Remembering her dream of being a ballerina, Forehand and a friend began taking dance classes at the North Arkansas Dance Theatre. Now Forehand is dancing en pointe in a class full of 10-year-olds and couldn’t be happier.

“I’ll be dancing as a bird in Peter Pan in a few months,” Forehand said.

It isn't the first time she's tried something new in recent years.

"The White River Road Runners here in Batesville accepted me as a runner at the age of 30, even though I'd never run before," Forehand said.

With the group's help, she ran a marathon by the time she turned 33.

In 2006, Forehand traveled with a small group of Batesville residents to the town's newly named sister city in China.

In her spare time, Forehand takes ballroom dance lessons with her husband, Sean, and the couple have worked with the local chapter of Big Brothers Big Sisters for years. Forehand's "little sister," Danielle, just turned 20.

"The first time we hung out, we went to a nursing home to hand out Christmas cards," Forehand said. "It's been amazing to watch her grow up, learn to drive, and now she's in college."

Forehand and her husband attend Fellowship Bible Church in Batesville and enjoy spending time with their family and training their two dachshunds, Ava Elizabeth and Ilsa. Forehand counts training Ava Elizabeth — who had some anxiety problems — to win the Fastest Weenie Dog in Independence County title among her proudest moments.

It's a busy life, but Forehand doesn't seem to mind.

"The West Magnet kids ... that's the whole story," Forehand said.

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## **House votes 94-0 for bill to create task force to plan veterans home**

LITTLE ROCK — The House of Representatives unanimously voted Friday to create a task force to help plan a new state veterans home.

Senate Bill 3, proposed by Sen. Jane English, R-North Little Rock, passed by a 94-0 vote.

The veterans-home bill was one of several matters taken up by the Legislature on Friday. Lawmakers also discussed laws affecting libraries and rape victims.

Rep. John Edwards, D-Little Rock, who is sponsoring a bill that would allow the director of the state Department of Veterans Affairs to select the location for the home, spoke in favor of English's bill.

"Everyone understands that when they see a veteran come home from the airport, how emotional and wonderful that day is when they greet their family. And everyone understands how important it is that respect is paid to that veteran at their final resting place when that flag is draped on their casket. This bill deals with the in between. The life that's in between," Edwards told the House.

The bill also unanimously passed in the Senate on Jan. 22.

The task force would study the matters related to opening the new veterans home and submit recommendations to the General Assembly. Those concerns include the number of veterans who would live at the facility, the types of services it would offer and the funding structure for constructing a new facility.

A report would be due to the House Committee on Aging, Children and Youth, Legislative and Military Affairs; the Senate Committee on State Agencies and Governmental Affairs; and the Legislative Council by Oct. 31.

#### MEETINGS WITH GOVERNOR

In other business, House Speaker Davy Carter, R-Cabot, announced that representatives will meet Wednesday to discuss the \$1.1 billion steel mill that is planned to be built in Osceola.

The state is seeking to issue \$125 million in general obligation bonds to construct the steel mill under Amendment 82, which passed in 2004 to provide incentives for superprojects.

The Senate has already announced a similar session on Monday to discuss the project.

Matt DeCample, a spokesman for Gov. Mike Beebe, said the governor would be speaking at both meetings.

#### CUSTODY RIGHTS

The House Committee on Aging, Children and Youth, Legislative and Military Affairs passed a bill that would prevent rapists from having custody rights when the rape results in a pregnancy.

Under House Bill 1002, all rights to custody and visitation would be terminated immediately after the father's rape conviction.

"This bill to me is about doing something for victims and protecting the rights of a woman who's been raped," the bill's sponsor, Edwards, told the committee.

In certain cases, such as statutory rape, the mother could petition the court to reinstate the custody rights of the father, Edwards added.

#### LIBRARY BOOKS

The House Committee on City, County and Local Affairs approved a bill to let county law-library boards dispose of property.

Senate Bill 94, sponsored by Sen. Jake Files, R-Fort Smith, was approved by a voice vote.

Files said after the meeting that current law doesn't address how to dispose of the law books.

He said the Sebastian County Law Library Board wanted to be sure it can dispose of old books before it moves to another site.

"The new location would not support the weight of all the volumes," Files said.

Sebastian County law librarian Brenda Elliott said the library will keep about 4,800 volumes and discard 17,000.

She said the library will dispose of old books, encyclopedias, digests, insurance guides, and copies of the Harvard Law Review.

“We want to deal with it correctly, we don’t want to just dump them in a Dumpster. We don’t want them just boxed up somewhere in a storage facility ... but like I said, they’re worthless,” Elliott said.

She said the library will try to make sure the information in books that are thrown away is available for researchers online.

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