

GATEWAY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Renowned storyteller kicks off Gateway reading challenges

Huntington – Nationally recognized storyteller Diane Edgecomb performed for Gateway elementary students on Thursday, October 27 to help Chester and Littleville kick-off their annual yearlong reading challenges. Providing three performances over the course of the day – and never telling the same tale twice — Edgecomb had students on the edge of their seats and generated excitement around this year’s Reading Challenge!

She began with a performance for students in grades K-5 at Chester Elementary School, which included “*Kate’s Acorn*”, an inspirational story about a child who was always trying to make the world better and the earthworm, bug and centipede who help her. Other stories that she shared were “*Fireflies*”, a book written by Julie Brinklow, along with the story of a water spirit who travels through pipes to learn why her reservoir is disappearing. She also had the children help sing the Bill Steele tune, “Garbage”.

From Chester, Edgecomb traveled to the Gateway Performing Arts Center, where she delivered two performances: one for students in grades K-3, and the second for students in grades 4-6. One of the stories told to the younger children was “*Plenty of Nuts*”—a story about a girl named Beatrice who could not sit still until she learns to focus from a neighborhood squirrel. As energized as the younger grades were by participating in Edgecomb’s stories, the older students sat mesmerized as she shared more nature tales for a slightly older audience.

In each performance, Edgecomb reminded students to do two things: read something in a unique place (under a table, on a swing) and to read until they forget where they are and find themselves transported into the story.

This year’s school year reading challenge is called “Where on Earth can you Read?” Students received a list of 100 possible places to read, which included various places such as by a fan, under a tree, with a flashlight, at a restaurant, or reading to others (like a pet!). Students must read each time for at least 20 minutes for the place to count toward the challenge. Each student who returns their list with 25 places checked off will receive a free book.

Students will also ask parents or caregivers to take a picture of them reading in an unusual place (up to 3 pictures per child), which will be added to a special bulletin board. The first class at each school to have all students send in a picture will receive a prize.

Chester students are also invited to submit ideas for interesting places that Assistant Principal Mrs. Sara (Laing) Luciani can read this year. When the school gets to certain milestones, the student body will ask her to read someplace unusual!

Edgecomb was named one of "120 English speaking storytellers worldwide" by McFarland's press and was touted as "A storyteller in the grand tradition" by Publisher's Weekly. She has also been featured several times on NPR's "Living on Earth" Program. Edgecomb's stories stem from nature mythology, tied to place and seasonal events. Her original children's story "Pattysaurus" won an Honors Award from Storytelling World Magazine. She has been an acclaimed storyteller for 25 years, performing at museums, schools, libraries, camps and festivals. For more information, please consult her website www.livingmyth.com .

Edgecomb's performance, and the new books for student readers who reach reading goals this year, were funded by the Gateway Education Foundation at the request of reading teachers Gail Gingras, Margaret Petzold (Littleville) and Christine Bresnahan (Chester). The Gateway Education Foundation is a non-profit organization that formed to enhance the education of Gateway students. Over the past 4 years, they have funded over 50 projects totaling \$32,000, thanks to fundraisers and the generous donations of families, staff, alumni, area businesses and community members. For more information, visit their website www.gatewayeducationfoundation.org.

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Photo: Award winning storyteller Diane Edgecomb visited Gateway elementary schools last week and led students in nature-filled adventures, encouraging them to read "until they forget where they are."