

DALE FOOR CORNERSTONE AWARD HONOREE

Christine Shanks

Christine (Chris) Shanks started her career as a certified occupational therapy assistant (COTA) before then becoming an occupational therapist in the Mount Carmel hospital system. While in her mid 30s, shortly after delivering her third child, Chris underwent an invasive brain tumor removal surgery. That did not stop her from pursuing her professional dreams.

At that time, 28 years ago, Chris shifted roles to school-based therapy, initially being contracted by both Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools and St. Matthew's. She became the District's head occupational therapist and has enthusiastically mentored her team of therapists and teachers while also serving numerous COTAs and OT students.



"Chris has such a strength for collaboration and being a vital team player," Amy Ellis, a registered and licensed occupational therapist with GJPS said. "She is truly an expert in her field, has perfected the craft of therapy and has a wealth of therapeutic knowledge. She is passionate down to her core about helping to promote children's functional daily living skills in order to build their independence, confidence and self-worth as they navigate their school environment."

Through her efforts in the classroom, Shanks worked to learn about the needs of her students and inform and help parents understand their child. She continually works to ensure that her students are showing progress with a variety of skills and tasks to be sure their quality of life improves.

"Thanks to Chris, students learned how to hold a

pencil when their hand was very weak, how to use scissors and glue sticks when their eyes and hands didn't work together, how to write their name within a space so others could read it, how

to zip their coat and tie their shoes to go outside to recess, how to type a paragraph when writing was just too hard, how to regulate their emotions when they were frustrated, how to complete a job application to get a job or how to navigate the kitchen to make a meal," Sue Wieging, GJPS Director of Special Education said. "The list of fine motor and sensory skills Chris addressed and taught in order for students to make progress at school and in their life is endless."

In addition to her own personal efforts, she continually worked to make the team at GJPS better equipped to serve students.

"She would seek out other professionals to create plans and brainstorm ideas so that the team could deliver the best services for each child she saw," GJPS Speech Language Pathologist Kara Eppert said.

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