

\* **Timothy Persons** presented the graduation speech for the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Wake Forest University on May 15, 2010. His speech was titled “Three Easy Pieces.” Persons is the chief scientist in the U.S. Government Accountability Office in Washington, D.C. Previously he was employed as a technical director with Intelligence Advanced Research Projects

Activity under the office of the U.S. Director of National Intelligence.

**94** **Viola Holmes** ('95M) of Charlottesville won the 2010 American Dietetic Association Diversity Leader Program Award at the ADA's annual Food and Nutrition Conference and Exhibition. The conference was held in Boston in November. Holmes

is a registered dietitian and works as a clinical nutritionist and certified diabetes educator.

\* **Nathan Lyon**, host of *A Lyon in the Kitchen* on the Discovery Health channel, completed taping the first season of *Growing A Greener World* for PBS. View full episodes at [www.growing-agreenerworld.com](http://www.growing-agreenerworld.com). In December, Lyon published a children's adventure book, *Sam The Clam*. ([www.authorhouse.com/Book-](http://www.authorhouse.com/Book-)

store/). Last fall the chef visited Washington, D.C., and raised money for his first school — Long Branch Elementary School, in Arlington. He also visited with and cooked with JMU students and Gregory Layne, the executive sous chef for E-Hall. Lyon also co-hosted the Dine LA Restaurant Week and cooked and spoke at the Second-Annual Gastric Cancer Fund Gala in San Francisco.

## A special teacher for special-needs preschoolers

*Janice C. Wiley ('77) is Virginia Area 5 Teacher of the Year* BY GABRIELLE PICCININNI ('11)

**O**n the morning of Sept. 15, **Janice C. Wiley ('77)** was on lunch duty, surrounded by dozens of perky preschoolers. While exiting the serving line with one of her students, Wiley caught a glimpse of an unexpected and distressing sight — her husband.

“I love my husband very much, but when I saw him, I was terrified!” After noticing her husband’s broad smile, and the approaching Lynchburg City School Superintendent Paul McKendrick holding a bouquet of flowers, Wiley was put at ease. With a kiss from her husband and a letter of congratulations from McKendrick, Wiley learned of her nomination as the 2011 Virginia Teacher of the Year representative for Area 5 and her subsequent candidacy for the official Mary V. Bicouvaris Virginia Teacher of the Year Award.

Each year the Virginia Department of Education selects eight teachers who epitomize the best in teaching and who are the best among all the Teachers of the Year from across the state. These eight represent eight areas of the commonwealth, and one of them is given the state’s top honor. Wiley’s ability to inspire, encourage and challenge her students is part of her successes as an early childhood education teacher and among the reasons she was selected as the top Teacher of the Year for Area 5.

After receiving the nomination by her school division in April, Wiley entered into the application process for the top Virginia Teacher of the Year award. “I work with such a phenomenal group of professionals,” says Wiley. As the first special education teacher selected as Teacher of the Year for Lynchburg City Schools, Wiley wanted to particularly represent her colleagues in special education and preschool special education with her best efforts.

“It is the most exciting event to happen to me in my 34 years of teaching. I am honored and humbled,” says Wiley. Amidst the giggles and curious smiles of countless preschoolers, Wiley explains that the funniest part of the surprise was watching the students’ reactions. One little girl, taking note of the flowers and kiss from her husband, congratulated Wiley on being pregnant!

Inspired by her parents, Adell and Keen Carter, to pursue a career in education, Wiley studied speech pathology at JMU. She recalls the immense benefit of working with professors from a wide range of disciplines. “My professors willingly shared their experiences and prepared us well for the real world.”

After three decades in classrooms, Wiley says she continuously feels challenged and rewarded by interactions with students.

“I am a teacher by choice. It is who I am and what I love to do.”

Wiley currently works as an early childhood special education teacher at Hutcherson Early Learning Center and contends that the greatest lesson she has learned is the importance for the teacher to develop a close, personal relationship with each child. Wiley teaches her preschoolers the value of relationship building by showing a respect for, and interest in, her students, their parents and other teachers. “I share my joy and excitement about a student’s success and inspire others to embrace the educational vision for students,” she says.

Wiley begins each school day by greeting her preschool, special-needs students at the bus stop and then works with them in an inclusive classroom setting. In the afternoon, she transitions to her classroom for preschool students with autism.

Wiley provides her students with a learning framework within which each child is free to explore and engage in active learning. “An interested, supportive, invested and fully present teacher is vital to each child’s success,” she says. After determining the learning style that works best for each student, Wiley utilizes research-based strategies proven to activate the brain.

“I love what I do,” says Wiley. The unparalleled experiences of seeing students accomplish a task they have struggled with, hearing speech impediments overcome, or watching as students with special needs are included in play activities with peers are just three examples of the small miracles Wiley inspires. Though this Teacher of the Year attaches her success to her students’ achievements. “I am rewarded when I see my students succeed.” ❧



**Janice C. Wiley ('77) is the 2011 Teacher of the Year for Lynchburg City Schools and Virginia Area 5.**