

BRIGHTLIGHTS

[Joan Kindig]

Igniting imaginations

BY GABRIELLE PICCININNI ('11)

W e all remember the books we loved as kids — the ones that made everyone want to give a mouse a cookie, say “goodnight” to the moon, or discover where the wild things are. They are the books we read, re-read and continue to love.

Joan Kindig, JMU professor of reading education, believes “what you read as a child becomes part of who you are when you grow up.” From Harold’s adventures that made every kid wear out the purple crayons, to Nancy Drew’s mysteries that made everyone a detective, reading ignites the imagination.

Kindig’s love of reading also started in childhood. She later studied English at Hofstra University and earned her M.Ed. and Ed.D. from the University of Virginia. In 2007, in her eighth year of teaching at U.Va., she visited the JMU campus. After meeting the College of Education faculty and learning about JMU’s education program with its emphasis on teaching, she fell in love with Madison.

In 2008, she traded her orange and navy for purple and gold, and became part of the largest education school in the state. With expertise in children’s literature and a knack for getting kids excited about reading, Kindig teaches pre-service teachers and graduate student classes in reading and children’s literature.

It’s a knack that even gets college students excited about reading. In 2008 Kindig invited Jon Scieszka to campus. The author of *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales*, Scieszka is the first National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature. He spoke to students about the importance of quality children’s literature.

Scieszka and Kindig are on the same mission: to consistently inspire kids, teachers and readers. “Joan Kindig is a national treasure,” Scieszka says. “If we

could clone her and sprinkle a million of her around the country, every kid would be reading and be excited about it. Dr. Kindig obviously knows the pedagogy of reading teaching and understands its value, but she also knows that reading is personal and, most importantly, that kids



Professor of Reading Education Joan Kindig has dedicated her career to getting children excited about reading.

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need to be excited to want to be readers.”

Kindig received the 2008 Margaret Sue Copenhaver Contribution to Education Award, which recognized her life work, passion and commitment to providing the very best of books for young people. Among her long list of awards and recognitions, Kindig also is involved in the Virginia Readers’ Choice Awards — part of the International Reading Association — and runs the Teachers’ Choice Program in the southeast region.

Last year she helped establish JMU’s first-ever free summer reading clinic. Serving as the capstone to the M.Ed. of Reading Education program designed by JMU colleague Gay Ivey, the clinic provided the opportunity for children to experience the wonder of literature outside the classroom. JMU repeated the clinic this past summer at John C. Myers Elementary. Although held at a new location with 14 different grad students and 28 different children, the results remained the same — each child left the clinic with a new enthusiasm for reading and each grad student left with an enriched passion to teach reading.

“I take advantage of everything that JMU offers — and it offers a lot,” Kindig says. This past spring she served as the faculty member-in-residence for the JMU Semester in London program. She taught From Beatrix Potter to Harry Potter, a course in British children’s literature.

Kindig’s love of reading is spurring her on to new ventures. She is writing a book titled *Motivating Readers in Grades 4-8*. She is also a contributing writer to *Exemplary Instruction in the Middle Grades: Teaching that Supports Engagement and Rigorous Learning*. This fortuitous opportunity was a “real example of JMU collegiality,” explains Kindig. JMU Professor and Coordinator of Reading Education Gay Ivey was originally approached with the project and suggested Kindig tackle the noteworthy endeavor.

With an unwavering determination to get kids excited about reading, Kindig says that it’s her students who inspire her. “I went into this business thinking ‘I would love to just help one kid learn how to read.’ Now I get to teach the next generation of exceptional teachers, and they will get even more children excited about reading.”

* Learn more about Joan Kindig and the College of Education at www.jmu.edu/coe/eere/FACKindig.shtml.