

Caring for the campus' youngest students

## Sue Wrobel does much more than babysit

Sue Wrobel doesn't have to watch Art Linkletter's "Kids Say the Darndest Things" in re-runs or on YouTube. She sees it practically everyday at the Campus Child Center.

The director of the Campus Child Center hears a lot of stories from the 1- to 5-year-olds who are exploring newly found language skills. "Once they can talk, I hear some really good stories, stories that parents necessarily don't want to hear about," she says.

Wrobel has scribbled down many funny tales she's heard, but don't expect her to publish a book like TV host Linkletter who made childrens' stories his trademark. Rather, Wrobel simply cherishes the time with kids when their language is exploding. "I see so much growth and development in the kids," she notes. "It's fun to watch that."

Wrobel and her staff do much more than babysit children of students, faculty and staff at the center attached to the Recreational Eagle Center. They have structured lesson plans for the children. They continuously teach social skills. And, they meet with parents to discuss progress.

While parents thank the staff for their strong mentoring, staff members relish the opportunity to be with children. "Working with young children is so very rewarding because of the many opportunities to be creative, to thoroughly explore one's environment and to learn through play," explains Wrobel. "I have tried to highlight the uniqueness of creative play and exploration."

This past spring, Wrobel spearheaded creation of an outdoor garden adjacent to the center's playground.

Children, and their parents, take part in caring for the plants, along with enjoying fresh vegetables.

Along with creativity, Wrobel's favorite part of the job is the center's growing reputation. "One of the best parts of the job is knowing that when I walk through the door in the morning I'm going to have a great day,"

she explains. "And, when I walk out the door, I know I'm leaving one of the greatest programs in the region."

The center has the numbers to prove that. It has passed stringent accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children consistently since 1993.

It's a team effort by all staff that makes the center so successful. "They're very creative, dedicated and enthused,"

explains Wrobel. "They want the best for kids and they pull it off."

It's not just the professional staff. Wrobel and five teachers mentor student workers, as well as early childhood and elementary education majors. Center staff typically provides 3,600 hours of field study each year.

The future educators are mentored by a teaching team that has more than a century of experience. The longevity of the staff (all have remained with the center under Wrobel's watch) is a tribute to Wrobel's leadership.

Wrobel is humbled by the unsolicited comments she hears. "When I hear about the Campus Child Center on campus and in the community, it's always positive," she notes. "It's a big success to maintain that energy and enthusiasm. For people to come back and feel that energy, that's the biggest success."



### The Sue Wrobel file

- Educator at UW-L Campus Child Center since 1986; director since 1991.
- Student teaching supervisor since 1995; ad-hoc lecturer in UW-L School of Education since 1998.
- UW-L Academic Staff Council member, 1996-99; numerous campus and UW System committees.
- Church pianist, St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Stoddard, since 1998.
- YWCA Outstanding Woman Award in Education/Administrator, 2000.
- Two degrees from UW-L: master's of education, 1996; bachelor's in elementary education, 1979.