

2016 Cornerstone Award Inductee Jill Rak

"I've always been involved in Gahanna schools as both a teacher and a parent."

Though Jill Rak was born and raised in Pennsylvania, once she relocated to Gahanna with her family she knew it would be a good fit. She's spent more than 25 years in the classroom, logging 18 years with primary students at Lincoln Elementary. Though she has since retired from teaching, Lincoln Elementary families still see her daily in the office, where she now works as building secretary.

"I taught kindergarten, first, and second grade throughout my career," Rak said. "I really enjoyed the transitions you see in second grade – they become more independent, have more responsibilities, and really refine their skills. I also had a wonderful team of teachers who complemented each other so well."

"My oldest daughter has the privilege of having Mrs. Rak as her second grade teacher the year before she retired, and we were so lucky to have her! My daughter thrived in her class," said Patty Kovacevich. "Mrs. Rak taught her to have a love for learning."

When she wasn't in the classroom, Rak served as the teacher representative for the Lincoln Parent/Teacher Organization, as well as head room parent and PTO member for her daughter's school, Jefferson Elementary. Her positive experiences at Gahanna-Jefferson had a lot to do with the personal relationships between teaching staff and families.

"I've had a lot of different roles in my life (Ron's wife, Bethany's mom,) but at Lincoln I'm Mrs. Rak," she said. "Here I am me, it's my identity."

Her Lincoln coworkers aren't sure what they would do without her, noting that her kind heart and million-dollar smile are assets to the building. They called her "committed to Gahanna and caring about everyone." She can often be found with a word of encouragement for students, a piece of candy for teachers, or a bottle of water for the grounds crew.

"My daughter, a Gahanna Lincoln graduate, is now a first grade teacher at High Point Elementary," Rak said. "When I truly retire, I hope to go and volunteer in her classroom. I love to read to students!"

Rak is a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh.