

Retirement

'Mr. C.' helps St. Monica's youth compute

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Kierra Bryant, a first-grader at St. Monica's School, spoke for many of her fellow students when talking about their computer teacher, "Mr. C."

"I like him for a teacher. I like how he teaches," she said.

Her friends Breanna Hardgers, Alexis Walker and Taron Bell agreed with Kierra's take on Mr. C. All of them called Mr. C. "a nice man" or "a good man."

Mr. C. is Edward M. Croteau, 61. Croteau volunteers 20 hours a week at St. Monica's running the school's computer room. He said he enjoys the children, but doesn't let them get away with too much fooling around.

"We enforce general computer rules," he said with a smile. "No drooling. No fingers in the mouth. No slamming on the keys."

Croteau fixes equipment, tutors the students and educates the faculty about computers. He also has computerized the school's main office, installed computers in some of the classrooms, and has even been tapped to assist the diocesan schools office in creating a computerized system for profiling diocesan schools.

"He really is our computer program," said Sister Mary Marvin, RSM, St. Monica's principal. "It'd be wonderful if we could have more people like him."

Croteau, a former electrical engineering supervisor at Eastman Kodak Company, retired in 1991 and has spent the last five years helping St. Monica's with its computer program.

"I have to stay active," said Croteau, a parishioner at St. John the Evangelist Church in Greece. "I couldn't stay home and wait for the mailman to come, for the garbage to be collected. I don't know how people can retire and just play golf."

As soon as Croteau left Kodak, where he worked for 25 years, the Long Island native began searching for volunteer opportunities. After working for a few different groups, a friend told him that St. Monica's was trying to launch a comput-



Edward Croteau, a volunteer at St. Monica's School, Rochester, gives a helping hand to first-grader Jovan Greenaway.

Matthew Scott/Staff photographer

er program.

"It was chaos here at the time," Croteau said of his first visit to the school five years ago.

He pointed to neatly organized shelves that he said were once filled with unorganized mounds of computer disks and pieces of equipment. Croteau organized the school's computer and software acquisitions into a coherent learning system.

In the past several years, he said, the

school has received donations of computers and software from individuals, including Croteau, and has also received computers through a federally funded program, Title I, that helps public and non-public schools. The school has also bought its own computers and software, he said.

He continually catalogs software for the school's teachers, concentrating on the educational value of various programs

and the grade level for which they can be used.

Croteau said he's tried to teach the students that computers are useful for more than just video games. He added that he's seen both teachers and students gradually become more comfortable with using computers over the past few years.

Croteau said he helps the younger students overcome their nervousness about doing schoolwork on computers by using a little psychology.

"I tell them, 'This is new to me, too. Let's learn this together,'" he said. "Once they realize they can use it, it's great to see their eyes light up."

Croteau chalked up his enthusiasm and dedication to the program to the school itself. Prior to coming to St. Monica's, he said he found some of the organizations he worked for, or considered helping, to be wanting in many ways. But he had a different feeling when he met the St. Monica's staff, he said.

"If the school environment wasn't good, I wouldn't want to stay," he said. "Everyone works well together."

Sister Marvin said Croteau is one of numerous volunteers who keep St. Monica's running. Between 20 and 25 such volunteers come to the school each week, she said. They include area college students, Catholic high school students, parents, professionals, and retirees like Croteau.

"There's a lot of retirees who do a wonderful job here," she said.

Croteau added that he'd like more volunteers to help him, particularly adults who could help with children in the lower grades, and anyone who knows how to repair computers.

"The volunteers must be interested in computers and be willing to commit for a least a school year," he said.

And if they do, maybe they'll get a chance to meet lively kids like Dominique Granison, a first-grader.

"I like coming to the computer room," she said "Mr. C. is a nice man."

For information on volunteering at St. Monica's, call 716/235-4140.



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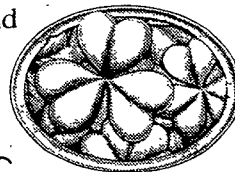
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