



# America Reads

## Meet Sue Westervelt, "America Reads and more" Volunteer at Senkow Elementary

Sue Westervelt taught health and physical education at the elementary and middle school levels in Upper Darby School District for 31 years. She has been retired for 11 years. Five years ago she was looking for a volunteer opportunity and saw a piece in the Delco Daily Times about RSVP and the America Reads program. She thought, "I could do that!" Sue went to a meeting and signed up for a place in Aston Elementary, as it was in her community. She also noticed that on the list of schools was the new Walter Senkow Elementary School. She had a good friend who taught there so she put that down as a second choice. Shortly after that she received a call from RSVP asking her if she would go to Senkow as they

needed volunteers.

Senkow is an Upper Darby School District school but is located in Glenolden, Pa. It was leased from St. Georges for 6 yrs. to take care of over-flow from Bywood Elementary. All the students are bussed there from Upper Darby. Senkow is a small school (around 230 students) with a very diverse population. There are many nations represented in the Senkow population.

"The students are lovely and the staff and principal, Sean Burns, are excellent. There is so much structure at Senkow but so much caring, creativity and ingenuity," said Westervelt.

This feeling is obvious from the moment you walk in, there is a fabu-

lous tree that represents the different nationalities attending the school and I was greeted with a hello from every teacher and student I encountered as a visitor.

"The wonderful thing is that even though the school is out of the district, we have very supportive parents who come to school events and conferences. I believe the district helps by providing busing for special events." Said Westervelt.

"Many of the teachers have become my friends and they are always so grateful for whatever I do there. This is a point I would stress to anyone looking to volunteer----- The teachers are SO GRATEFUL!" said Westervelt. "Many



Jasmeen Kaur, an ELL, gets a "Hi-5" from RSVP volunteer Sue Westervelt after successfully pronouncing letter sounds and words.



Senkow's Diverse Unity Tree

### Reading Quote

"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more you learn, the more places you'll go."

— Dr. Seuss, "I Can Read With My Eyes Shut!"

## RSVP America Reads Program

609 W. State Street  
Suite E  
Media, PA 19063

Phone: 610-565-5563  
E-mail: [lynnshelton55@verizon.net](mailto:lynnshelton55@verizon.net)  
Web: [www.rsvpdelco.org](http://www.rsvpdelco.org)

## Connecting People to Purpose

### Westervelt Continued from page 1

have given me strategies for working with the students.”

Sue has also enjoyed accompanying classes on an occasional field trip and reading to classes during Dr. Seuss week. “I have been along for trips to the Academy of Natural Science, Philadelphia Art Museum and the 5th grade class trip to Wildwood, N.J., it’s so much fun,” said Sue.

“I began my volunteering at Senkow in its first year. I had said I would give 2-4 hours a week but after being there just one day I decided to stay the entire day, volunteering every Thursday,” said Westervelt.

“I started out with second graders and read to and with them. By the middle of the first year I was working with other grade levels as well. After being there 5 years I now have worked with students from every grade (1-5) and I do whatever the teachers ask of me,” said Sue. “I do Reader’s theater (from RTI program), which helps increase

## **“There has been a change to our AR Wrap up plans”**

- Where:** TBD
- When:** September
- Who:** Volunteers, Teachers and Reading Specialist & Principals
- Why:** To have the opportunity to share your feedback, meet fellow volunteers, and enjoy Breakfast.

### **Invitations/Details to follow**

word fluency and comprehension through acting, with 5th grade and also math and reading fluency checks.

“I do reading with first and second graders. Mrs. Podgajny, an excellent teacher and my friend, teaches 5th grade. She gives me my assignments for Reader’s theater and the math and reading fluency checks. Ms. Nataloni, first grade, gives me assignments for her first graders. The reading specialist, Toni Turner, also a good friend, gives me my assignments for other students, mostly second grade ELL students English Language Learners.” Said Sue.



Marie Sophia, Zarah, Khalid and Crystalbell perform with enthusiasm in Mrs. Podgajny’s 5th grade Reader’s Theater.

“My experience here is so different than what I did as a teacher. I always taught large groups of children being a health and physical education teacher. It is very refreshing to work with small groups or one-on-one. The challenge of working with ELL and special education students is a wonderful opportunity and I love to see the smiles when something “clicks” with them for the first time. Reading opens doors for children and indeed doors are closed without this skill. I tell the students that books are treasures and we need to value them and spend time with them every day. The best way to model that behavior is to read with children. Anyone who can read and who cares about kids can do this job. What a rewarding and fun way to volunteer!” said Westervelt enthusiastically.

If you are interested in volunteering in a school in your community, we will host a training in September to place volunteers for the 2010-2011 school year. For more information, contact Lynn Shelton at 610-565-5563.