



Kenai Peninsula Borough School District
Golden Apple Award | September 14, 2020

Ms. Judy Cox

In 1988, Ms. Judy Cox started her career in education, and after her retirement, she continued doing what she loves as a substitute teacher. “For 32 years she has been inspiring, delighting, and educating students as a kindergarten teacher, first grade teacher, librarian, and an amazing substitute,” said nominator Kim Bates.

“Ms. Cox is also known as the *Book Lady* and her love of reading inspired her to collect and give away books in her community. In the summer, you can find her at the end of her driveway, with piles of books, eager to share with any and everyone who passes by. Ms. Cox has blessed the lives of educators, students, administrators, and parents (many who are former students), and continues to do so with endless energy and a true love for teaching.”

Third grade teacher Catherine Lyon said, “When called upon, Judy is up for long term subbing, one day subbing, and in the middle of the night emergency subbing. She makes sure that she is there, ready for the students, no matter what is happening in the classroom.” “Judy makes it a point to know everyone's name and greet them with enthusiastic familiarity,” said Catherine Mendenhall, Behavioral Support Teacher. “She has taught all of my children in various long-term substitute assignments, and keeps up with me about their news, taking a huge personal investment in my family. In fact, she makes me feel like part of her family whenever I see her in the hallways.”

Music teacher Jonathan Dillon shares, “Ms. Cox has a kind heart and is innovative in the ways that she approaches and supports students—maybe this kiddo needs some encouragement, that kiddo needs a smile, and this one just needs to move their body while she plays the ukulele!” Donna Anderson, third grade teacher says, “*When I grow up, I want to be just like Judy.* She is a role model, not only for children, but also for adults.”

Fourth grade teacher Dave Daniel adds, “She exudes a love for learning in all that she does, and has an amazingly versatile “tool kit” for her subbing jobs. Judy can handle guest teaching from preschool to high school, but I believe her favorite is elementary age. She can take the children to faraway places in stories or in songs, as well as work out those math problems they don't get.” Sienna Griggs, fifth grade teacher said, “In the five years I have known her, she has never approached me in the hall without a smile or funny story. She goes out of her way to make our staff and students laugh and enjoy our days.”

Donna Schneiders, kindergarten teacher said, “My kids get so excited when they find out that Judy will be my sub that they start to jump up and down and scream.” Bill Vedders, third grade teacher said, “I met Judy my first year in Alaska when I was force transferred to a kindergarten teaching position at Redoubt Elementary. Having never taught kindergarten before, I was a bit distressed. The district gave me a few days to visit each kindergarten room so I wouldn't be a total stranger when kids were yanked from their beloved teachers to be in my room. Judy set me at ease immediately, and it was abundantly evident that this lady, surrounded by more Mickey Mouse memorabilia than I thought existed, had a deep and sincere

love for *her* children. I heard that Ms. Cox will be retiring again, this time from subbing. Thank goodness that was just fake news, and Judy will still be back in the classroom spreading the love of reading and learning wherever she goes. She will just decline outdoor duties on cold weather days!”

Second grade teacher Lyndi Miller said, “She has completed two long-term subbing positions for me while I was on maternity leave. I had peace of mind while Judy was in my classroom during long-term subbing, knowing that my students were getting a non-disrupted education with continued curriculum and also residing in a nurturing, happy environment. She has a real knack for understanding child development and engaging children to keep them excited to learn.”

Nicole Cunningham, fourth grade teacher says, “She is such a presence in our school that there is little to no one who does not know her or has had the opportunity to work with Ms. Cox. She comes in on her own time to help other subs, students, and staff. Ms. Cox works hard to build strong, loving relationships with the whole school and truly embodies what a passion for teaching looks like.”

Finally, Principal Karl Kircher says, “Having a substitute teacher often disrupts a child's rhythm at school, and this is not the case with Judy. She subs so often in our school—she never declines—that students know and love her like their regular teacher. Her day subbing usually starts with her playing the ukulele and singing *You are My Sunshine* with her students. At the end, she asks *Who loves you?* And students loudly reply, *You do!* They love to see her and greet her in the hall with smiles even when she is not their sub for the day. I love to see her in the hall as well, to get my own personal smile and pick me up conversation, a *dose of Judy* so to speak. She volunteers on a regular basis for all kinds of events, loves kids, and she loves to help.”

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District Board of Education is proud to recognize Ms. Judy Cox for her dedication to the students of the school district, past, present, and future.