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First Scratch Day declared a success

May 26, 2017



2017 Scratch Day participants

On Saturday, May 13, Georgia Southern University hosted its first Scratch Day event in the College of Education's Innovation Studio.

Scratch Day is a global network of events aimed to give educational professionals the opportunity to explore [Scratch](#), a free coding platform and online community designed for kids. The event was open to educational professionals who wanted to learn or share knowledge about Scratch and discover how it can enhance learning opportunities for students.

"I am declaring our first Scratch Day a success," said [Chuck Hodges, Ph.D.](#), associate professor of instructional technology at Georgia Southern. "I hope we can do a similar event for Scratch Day in 2018. Coding and computational thinking are current 'hot topics' in education, and it is important for us to help keep local teachers up to date with new technologies and concepts."

Fourteen educators representing Bulloch, Burke, Candler and Effingham County schools participated in the inaugural event including both group and one-on-one activities to explore Scratch and the implementation of the platform in the classroom.

“The format of the session, mostly hands-on practice, allowed the teachers the time to work with Scratch and get an idea of how it might work for their students,” said Hodges. “The follow-up evaluation showed that the session was “very useful” and that many of the teachers plan to use Scratch in their classes soon.”

Hodges and fellow instructional technology faculty member [Metek Akcaoglu, Ph.D.](#), coordinated the event. For more information about future events, follow the College of Education’s Innovation Studio on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Scratch was developed by the Lifelong Kindergarten Group at MIT and encourages creative thinking and reasoning for students to work individually or collaboratively in groups. Scratch is currently being utilized by students in elementary schools to colleges worldwide. For more information on Scratch, visit <https://scratch.mit.edu/>.

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Alumna named to South Carolina TOTY Honor Court

May 26, 2017



Elisabeth Hardy, Ed.D.

For 24 years Georgia Southern University College of Education Alumna Elisabeth Hardy, Ed.D., has served as an English teacher in classrooms across Georgia, Virginia and South Carolina.

Named Aiken County Teacher of the Year for 2015-2016, Hardy was also one of five teachers recently honored by the South Carolina Department of Education as a nominee for the state's title of Teacher of the Year. Though she was not named the recipient of the state title, Hardy will serve on the South Carolina Teacher of the Year Honor Court for the upcoming year.

Hardy says to fully understand the impact of these achievements, you must understand what the past year has entailed. Her husband, Kerry, was diagnosed with lung cancer in September 2015.

"As we navigated through the days and weeks thereafter, I fought to stay focused in the classroom and refused to lessen my expectations," she explained. "I was totally flummoxed when I was nominated at the school level, and never dreamed I would be named Teacher of the Year for North Augusta High School (NAHS)."

Now reaching her fifth year at NAHS, Hardy was overjoyed to find out she was not only the school's Teacher of the Year, but she was nominated for the title of the district's top teacher as well. She explained that on the day of the district banquet, she was sick, lost her voice and had her husband's upcoming appointment for scans and treatment on her mind.

"I was so overwhelmed with all that we faced, I could hardly comprehend what was happening when my name was called as the district Teacher of the Year," said Hardy. "If you had been there, that would have explained my uncontrollable crying and inability to make a coherent comment."

Hardy says she cannot take all of the credit for her recent accolades.

“I did not earn the title of Aiken County Teacher of the Year or state finalist on my own,” she said. “My administration—John Murphy, Paige Day, Sheldon Higginbottom and John Bradley—, my co-workers and the staff at North Augusta High School have been invaluable to me over the past year.”

As the district’s top teacher, Hardy was appointed to the Aiken County and South Carolina teacher forums which discuss and address educational issues on the district and state levels. Her learning and growing experiences have been too many to count, and she says the support from her community only reaffirms the passion she has for her chosen profession.

“Teaching is a calling,” said Hardy. “It requires passion, love, enthusiasm, drive, determination, a willingness to fail and try again (often several times a day), ever growing knowledge of our content areas and of changing practices and a decision to stay in it for the long haul.”



Hardy pictured working with a student at North Augusta High School.

Hardy knew in high school that her interests included English and teaching.

“I could think of no greater calling, especially since my grandmother was a teacher and had been such a wonderful influence and two of the people I most admired were teachers, as well,” she explained.

While working as a full-time educator, Hardy earned a master’s in adult vocational learning and a doctorate in curriculum studies from Georgia Southern.

When asked what her future plans entail, Hardy said, “I will be in the classroom for the next 15 years, at least.”

She also plans to continue writing, publishing and presenting at conferences as well as collaborating with her peers to expand and grow her knowledge.

“As a mentor and teacher leader, I find myself longing to work in a capacity to encourage and edify those in my profession, especially educators in their first five years in the classroom or those who have lost their passion,” explained Hardy. “I’m not sure exactly what shape that work will take, but I feel strongly that support for these educators and sharing the culture of care throughout a school will ultimately impact more students than I can on my own.”

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