

## 40-year nursing career ends for Willow School's nurse Straney

BY MARILYN THOMAS  
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The kids at Willow School were happy to have the school year come to a close, but for Willow School nurse Gail Straney it was bittersweet.

"I'll miss the kids," she said.

But after a 40-year career as a hospital nurse and then a school nurse, it was time to say goodbye.

The staff at Willow gave her a big send-off. For example, on National School Nurse Day on May 11 they all dressed in hospital scrubs and had the students make cards for Straney. And a group of students presented her with a special bouquet of dandelions.

Straney transitioned from 20 years at an Indiana hospital — the last several years on an oncology ward — to school nursing. She went back to school to be certified in school nursing.

Her first 15 years with Homewood District 153 were at Millennium School serving fifth and sixth graders. When Millennium closed, Straney moved to Willow dealing with pre-kindergarten to second graders.

The older kids were easier because they could tell her what their issues were. The younger kids, not so much. On any given day, Straney has treated kids with minor



Gail Straney

injuries — everything from a playground fall, to a bug bite and a tummy ache. She also is the keeper of medicines for allergy emergencies, and prescription drugs for children with chronic diseases who appeared at her door on scheduled times for medications.

"All day somebody needs something. If I don't see somebody for 20 minutes, I get a little anxious," she said.

"I love working here. I love the environment but it's not for everybody. You're on your own here, the only health person in the building," she said.

The public health aspect of nursing was something from her bygone days in nursing school at Purdue University, but she quickly got up to speed when COVID-19 hit. The pandemic proved to be a real challenge because it's not just the kids' needs she's had to be aware of but she had to relay information to immune-compromised family members as well.

"COVID has certainly been an interesting twist in a nursing life," she said.

## Schools bid farewell to 28 staff

BY CHRONICLE STAFF

June meant retirement for 28 school staff members. Congratulations to them and thanks for all they've done for our students and our schools.

### District 161

Pamela Abbott, Pre-K paraprofessional, Flossmoor Hills, 22 years.

Guadalupe Acosta, custodian, Heather Hill, 15 years.

Carmel Alterson, special education paraprofessional, Western Avenue, 10 years.

Pamela Cernetic, administrative assistant, Heather Hill, 23 years.

Barbara O'Connell, paraprofessional, Heather Hill, 10 years.

Vera Roberts, custodian, Western Avenue, 11 years.

### District 153

Jorge Alvarado, custodian, Churchill, 17 years.

Mary Carvlin, seventh grade teacher, Hart, 15 years.

Catherine Hansen, secretary, Student Support Services, 19 years.

Dawn Spisak, eighth-grade teacher, Hart, 18 years.

William Kregel, custodian, Churchill, 16 years.

Peter Robertson, assistant, Hart, 10 years.

Gail Straney, school nurse, Willow, 20 years.

### Homewood-Flossmoor High

Lisa Baker, mathematics, 24 years.

Patricia Boyd, speech & language pathologist, 29 years.

Lionel Cesar, French, 24 years.

Peggy Cesar, instructional assistant, 23 years.

Paula Crawford, PE, Health, Driver's Ed, 22 years.

Mary (Cathy) Frederickson, special education, 22 years.

Jane Harper, school librarian, 16 years.

Tammy Hunter, reading, 17 years.

Janet Marks, Career & Technical Education/culinary, 18 years.

Pamela Pinnow, social science, 20 years.

William Reardon, special education, 25 years.

Lynn Scanlon, mathematics, 13 years.

Janine Stroemer, English, 19 years.

Anthony Svozil, science, 19 years.

Duane VanSlyke, special education social worker, 31 years.

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