



**Dr. Maureen Marshall, FCPS Principal of the Year**

Dr. Maureen Marshall, Garfield Elementary School principal since 2005, might have been the only person surprised when Jack Dale, Fairfax County schools superintendent and other dignitaries made a surprise visit to the school to announce that she is the Fairfax County Teacher of the Year. It is much deserved recognition for "The Solution Lady" who is a driving force in the central Springfield community. Dr. Marshall also went on to win The Washington Post Distinguished Educational Leadership Award.

Dr. Marshall's own commitment to being a lifelong learner gives her insight into what works in education. This star educator has introduced several innovative teaching programs now used in other county schools. Dr. Marshall defines learning as going way beyond history and math. That's why she introduced the RC (Responsive Classroom) concept to Garfield. RC is based on the premise that children succeed when they have academic, social and emotional skills. Teachers at the middle school and high school that receive Garfield's students say they recognize Garfield graduates because of their positive interactions with others, and the leadership they bring to the school.

This comprehensive approach to learning also extends to Garfield families. When she became Garfield's assistant Principal in 2002 Dr. Marshall reached out to bring the entire family into the learning process. She combined Back-to-School night with the annual open house to create a Back-to-School Fair that attracts close to 80% of Garfield's families. Vantria and other local businesses host tables at the event that has included a petting zoo, free pizza and much more.

The slow economy is challenging for many Garfield families; half of the students qualify for the free and reduced lunch program. True to form Dr. Marshall finds solutions to help support Garfield families. Corporate donors provide laundry detergent and other necessities. A Backpack Food Program places healthy snacks provided by local businesses into student backpacks for the weekend.

The business involvement in Garfield has helped create a stronger community spirit in the central Springfield area. It fosters a community to school connection more often associated with a small town than an urban area. Plus it reflects the social, emotional and learning skills so prized within Garfield.

It's a demanding and hectic job for a working mother with two children and Dr. Marshall loves it. "I love coming to work," she claims with complete conviction. "Success attracts success. We all work long hours here and I get energy from the people."

Even as school budgets and staffing levels drop and class sizes rise, Dr. Marshall forges ahead with her commitment to providing a positive learning place that embraces the family, local businesses and the entire community. Her can-do attitude is contagious and she has a staff who work together to educate, feed, clothe and prepare their students to face life with a positive, caring attitude.

### **How Vantria Members Can Be Part of the Garfield Success**

Vantria is proud of our partnership with Garfield Elementary and our members' support of the school. You can help in simple ways that make a difference:

1. One of the easiest yet most generous, gifts is to register Garfield as a beneficiary on your grocery store shopper cards. Giant Foods, Safeway and other grocers donate a percentage of purchase dollars for customers who register schools and charities to benefit from their purchases. The stores allow more than one beneficiary per card so please share the wealth and add Garfield Elementary to your list.
2. Collect Box Tops for Education from General Mills products. Garfield receives .10 cents for each box top. For complete details and a list of participating products go to <http://www.boxtops4education.com/> Box tops can be left in the collection box in Vantria's lobby or mailed to:  
Garfield Elementary School  
Box Tops for Education  
7101 Old Keene Mill Road  
Springfield, VA 22150
3. Donate used children's books to Garfield.

Dr. Marshall sums up what she and her staff work to achieve at Garfield in their mission statement:

*Garfield Elementary School ...where students get what they need to succeed!*

All of us at Vantria are proud to be part of their mission in our small way. We congratulate Dr. Marshall, the Garfield staff, the students, parents and extended Garfield families, and all of Garfield's business and civic organization partners who work to make our community a better place to be, one student at a time.