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CAPITAL STYLE'S

WOMEN OF THE YEAR

By WENDI WINTERS



Dr. Jane Snider

Summit School founder building from the ground up

Dr. Jane Snider, founder of the Summit School in Edgewater and its longtime Head of School, stepped aside earlier this year and was named Executive Director, charged with directing the school's marketing and development work.

A private, independent, not-for-profit school, Summit serves children in grades 1 through 8 who are bright, but have dyslexia and other learning differences that make comprehending and learning in a traditional school environment difficult. The school has earned numerous awards including a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence Award in 1999.

"My first job with Summit was building a school from the bottom up: facility, program model and curriculum. Now, I'm building longevity after I'm gone," said Jane, 64.

While transition plans were in the formative stage, she commenced building the school's endowment fund. So far, she has raised \$4 million.

Jane had a lengthy career in education as a teacher, college professor and as a learning disabilities specialist before she decided to launch a school.

"Over the years, the parents of these kids asked me to open a school that could serve our county's children," she said. "Twenty-two years later, looking back, it was not a singular effort. A lot of wonderful people walked alongside me. It was a huge team, plus there were the families of the students who helped us."

In 1989, the school opened in a leased space in Upper Marlboro serving 25 children. Jane and various Summit School board members spent years searching for a permanent home for Summit in Anne Arundel County. In 1983, they found it at the quiet, idyllic Hidden Hill Farm in Edgewater, then the number two farm in the state for raising stallions. The school moved there in the fall of 1995. It serves one hundred children, a number it has maintained despite the economy. Class sizes vary from four to 12 students.

"An organization is good because of the people who work there," Jane noted. "Our success comes down to how teachers individualize and differentiate. We demonstrate to our parents that they're getting back more than they give in tuition."