



Recognition Honors Influential Educator Fairley

When a Staples executive asked Mayor Bill Bell to honor an outstanding educator, who had influenced his life, he had to think back a bit.

A graduate of the Winston-Salem schools, Bell recalled many teachers and principals. But Staples wanted someone from Durham, so he spoke with his wife, Judith, and his daughters, two of whom have taught in the Durham Public Schools. The answer came quickly. “I thought about someone who was not only impactful in education, but was impactful in this community, in so many different ways, and continues to do that,” Bell told more than 400 enthusiastic Sheppard magnet Middle School students. Then he introduced Julia Fairley.

The more than 30 year veteran educator started as a French teacher in Clarksville, Va. As a principal at Sheppard, she became known for her ability to awaken self-confidence and determination in struggling students.

In turn, Fairley selected Shepard to receive the \$1,000 that came with the honor. The TeachersCount and Staples award recognizes local celebrities and educators, who influenced them and is part of a “Behind Every Famous Person is a Famous Teacher. Fairley said she initially intended to teach a couple of years and then go to law school, but once she started she couldn’t leave education. She Virginia to teach French at Phillips Middle School in Chapel Hill, and worked her way up to assistant principal for educational services at Chapel Hill High School. She eventually joined the Durham City schools system as instructional supervisor for foreign languages, language arts, and social studies. But she missed the students.

She went on to become principal at Fayetteville Street Elementary School, where she implemented a French immersion studies program, and then Shepard Magnet School, which was transitioning to become an International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme. She continues to work with the Alpha Zeta Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and helps local elderly.

Over her career, she helped organize foreign travel for students, implemented a child and adult reading program, and created Saturday School, which included success and self-esteem building for students in Chapel Hill and Durham.

This is an excerpt from an article written by Virginia Bridges – Correspondent.