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## A Life Path Of Jeannine Garrett

Jacksonville Fla. – For Jeannine Garrett, her love for working with little kids is what motivated her to move ahead in life, despite her unforeseen future.

Garrett is the director of Wilma's Little People School at Jacksonville University and her love for working with young children is what drives her to get up each morning.

The local Jacksonville native plays a prominent role in Wilma's Little People School as director and leader of all education operations. She also serves as one of the main teachers at the school where she teaches kids anywhere from age 2 to 5.

Garrett has a long history of living in the Jacksonville area. She and her husband bought a broken down front where they occasionally ate lunch and later built on top of it to complete their very own house. They have lived there for the last 34 years where they have raised a wonderful family. She has 3 sons, 2 of which played tennis at JU, and a daughter. Also 2 grandchildren she helps look after. Amazingly, every one of her children and grandchildren went to and graduated from Wilma's Little People School and Jacksonville University.

The Dolphin pride is so strong within her family, she jokingly said, "my family really does bleed green and white."

Coming out of high school, Garrett first attended Georgia Southern as a Home Economics major. She was intent on learning all she could to become a successful woman for the future. Unfortunately, her boyfriend, and later husband, attended JU and she missed him too much. She decided to forfeit her own path and come down to Jacksonville to study with him. She didn't know what to expect at the time, but what lead in the future, no one could foretell.

"You just never know what the world has in store for you, but you just got to run with it." Garrett said.

At JU she changed her major to education, because they didn't offer home economics and by this time her affinity for children had been slowly growing.

"In the summer time, I remember going out and playing school. I'd play by myself, but I'd always picked to be the teacher, and I just knew that's what I really wanted to do." Said Garrett.

After earning her master's in education, life only became more complicated for Ms. Garrett. She had been teaching in elementary school in Duval for 13 years when Dr. K Johnson, founder of Wilma's Little People School, asked her to come and help out with teaching. At this time she just had twins, but decided to help anyway. Raising twins through the morning and working with other people's kids in the afternoon is only a task for a tough, zealous and unique woman.

"I remember the first class was one of the buildings in Founders and it was one room with a toaster and we had to take the kids across the hall for them to use the bathroom." Said Garrett

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The school originally started for education majors to help out with the younger kids and have them receive training before they make it to the real world. It first opened in June of 1993, only one month after Garrett got married in May. It was her immense passion to teach and educate young children of the next generation that helped her stay focused in this busy time period.

When asked if she ever gets bored or tired of the job Garrett said, “No. Every day is different. You never know what they’ll say or do. They’re so innocent, like little sponges just wanting to learn everything they can.”

Ms. Garrett loves her job as a teacher, but she would also like to have become a pediatrician or a children’s counselor. No matter what career choice she would have chosen, her dedication to kids is apparent.

“Anything I do, I know I want to work with kids.” Said Garrett

Despite making her own successful career, she still has three specific people she looks up to and receives motivation from. One of her role models is her mentor and founder of the school, Dr. K Johnson, just because of her resilience and character. Fran Kinney, former Jacksonville University President, serves as her second source of inspiration. Kinney served as a positive influence in Garrett’s life.

“I grew up to be her.” Said Garrett.

Lastly, her mother is the most important hero in her life. Only the most positive words were used to describe her 89-year-old mother.

“She is very strong. She’s just a fearless warrior. I hope to be as strong as her. She never said never.” said Garrett.

Jeannine Garrett’s drive to try new things comes from her enduring motivation to help inspire young minds. She didn’t know the events that would lead her to become a teacher, but she is grateful for everyone.

Garrett said, “Kids are refreshing, they just have such a vibrant energy they bring to room. They just, in a way, keep me young and honestly I think that’s what I love most about teaching.”