

Employee Of The Month: Sharlene Jackson



Sharlene Jackson serves as the program coordinator for the after-school program at Thirteenth Avenue/Dr. MLK, Jr. School for New Community.

Sharlene Jackson knows Thirteenth Avenue/Dr. MLK, Jr. School inside and out. She graduated from the traditional public school, which serves children in preschool through eighth grade, and watched her four children attend as well. Now she serves as the school operations assistant for the Newark Public School System, as well as the program coordinator for the after-school program New Community runs out of the building.

Jackson helps plan activities for the 30 third-graders that are part of the free after-school program, which runs from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. on school days. She makes sure the program offers a variety of different activities, including dance, music, cooking, arts and crafts and gym. Children also have set time to do

homework Monday through Thursday, with help available to them.

“We’re reinforcing what they learn during the school day,” Jackson said.

Activities aren’t limited to the school building, however. Jackson works with New Community Director of Youth Services Edward Morris on trips for the children, which have included outings to the circus, Medieval Times and the 26th Annual African-American Children’s Book Fair in Philadelphia.

This is the fourth year Jackson has been working for New Community as the after-school program coordinator. She began working at the school in 2001 as a per diem aide and was promoted three years ago to school operations assistant. During her tenure, the principal recommended her to Morris.

He’s glad she did.

“Ms. Jackson is one of the reasons why the Family Friendly Center at Thirteenth Avenue School is successful. She always makes the needs of the students a top priority,” Morris said.

Jackson had previously worked in day care and started working as an aide while she was finishing school. She now has a degree in accounting and enjoys her position in operations.

Her favorite part of being the after-school program coordinator is the children.

“I love the kids,” she said. “I just like to see the kids happy.”

Jackson was skeptical about taking on the role of program coordinator for New Community’s Youth Services Department because she had never done a job like that before. But she’s glad she accepted the position.

“It’s like another home for me besides Thirteenth Avenue,” she said. “NCC is there for me and I’m there for them.”

Jackson volunteers at many events that are part of Youth Services, including the father/daughter dance, breakfast with Santa and Halloween celebrations.

She is also very committed to Thirteenth Avenue School, which educated her and her children.

“I really love the school. I want to make sure everything is right,” she said. “This is what I love to do.”

She’s not the only one who likes giving back to her alma mater.

“A lot of kids come back to volunteer. You can’t get rid of them,” she said with a laugh. “It’s good they want to come back and be part of the school.”