

## **The Presley Years at Southwestern Middle School**

**1992-2003**

I was assigned as principal to Southwestern Middle School on July 1, 1992. Thus, I was excited to be the principal and anxious to meet the staff and students. One of my goals was to help the school develop an outstanding academic program that would be exciting to the students as well as the total community. In addition, I wanted the students to be proud to attend an excellent school.

The first person that I met was Southwestern's icon and my secretary, Ms. Edith Shannon. She was my backbone throughout most of my years at the school. Ms. Shannon had a vast knowledge of the school and how it operated. She helped me as well as so many staff members through the years. Ms. Shannon was a very efficient secretary, who wore many hats. Also, I inherited some wonderful assistant principals, Ms Barbara Antonelli, with whom I had previously worked at Ormond Beach Middle School, Mrs. Sharon Hill, and later Mr. Michael Strother. These individuals, who were dedicated and committed to their job responsibilities, the students, the school family and community and to me, played a key role in the overall success of the school.

So many people were integral to the success of Southwestern Middle School during my tenure as principal. However, I, truly, commend Mr. Don Tutt who was a social studies teacher who later assumed the position of Media Specialist. Wow! He made the media center come alive! Each time I entered the media center, students and teachers were everywhere and were involved in various learning activities. Mr. Tutt participated in all of the school activities, from the Washington D.C. trips to school dances, field days, and oh, yes, cookouts and our famous end of the year seafood feast. He and I were the chefs, and, oh, did we have fun!

During my years as principal, our buildings were renovated. The first major renovation project was the auditorium. Then two new buildings - the media center and the administration building were constructed. These new buildings paved the way for the renovation of the main classroom building,

My primary goal was for Southwestern to be an “A” school. For, I knew that our students had the ability to excel on state assessments, and we worked hard to develop a school improvement plan that would help us reach that goal. The teachers developed rigorous lessons that inspired our students to learn and to make significant gains on state assessments. Our parents supported our efforts and encouraged our children. Thus, one of my greatest joys was that we were recognized as an “A” school my last year as principal of the best school in Volusia County, Southwestern Middle School.