



## Dr. Megan Allen

### PATIENCE AND UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

By Charles Noyes | Photos by Kelly Z. Photography

**D**r. Megan Allen's journey to the Valley has taken many twists and turns, but it all stemmed from a decision she made in college. "I never thought I would become a teacher because my mother was a teacher. So, as a stubborn redhead, I didn't want any part of it. But I lost my mom to cancer right before graduating college," she said, "and some of her former students and colleagues reached out to me. Seeing how many lives she'd touched was stunning. It solidified the lasting impact a teacher can have. That experience changed my life in so many ways." From that point on, Megan knew that education and teaching was something that she wanted to pour herself into, but what she didn't know was exactly how far teaching would take her.

Megan was recognized by Florida as its 2010 Teacher of the Year and one of four finalists for 2010 National Teacher of the Year, honors she wasn't expecting to receive. "100% surprised and surreal," she laughed. "It allowed me and my 4th graders to have some truly surreal experiences." With about 20 years of experience teaching public school, those experiences have been transformed into lasting memories.

One such experience was the honor of performing the opening coin toss at a Tampa Bay Buccaneers (her favorite team) and New York Giants football game. "I don't think I'd ever realized how big professional football players are until I saw a 10-year old next to one." To Megan, it was sharing these moments with her students that made them particularly memorable. "Out of nowhere, I heard one of my kids shout 'I'm not even as tall as his bottom!'"

In another example, she was selected to represent her school as the Grand Marshall of a local Christmas parade. She and a few randomly selected students woke up very early in the morning, put on their best clothes, and piled into a convertible Corvette to be a part of the parade and wave to the crowds. "The only problem was that one of my kids got so worked up about everything that he ended up falling asleep in the backseat before the parade even started!"

But hilarious and nerve-racking situations are nothing new to Megan who had to think about what made her more nervous: meeting President Obama or testifying before Congress. "Being able to talk about your students and public education in front of Congress is a once-in-a-lifetime kind of thing," she