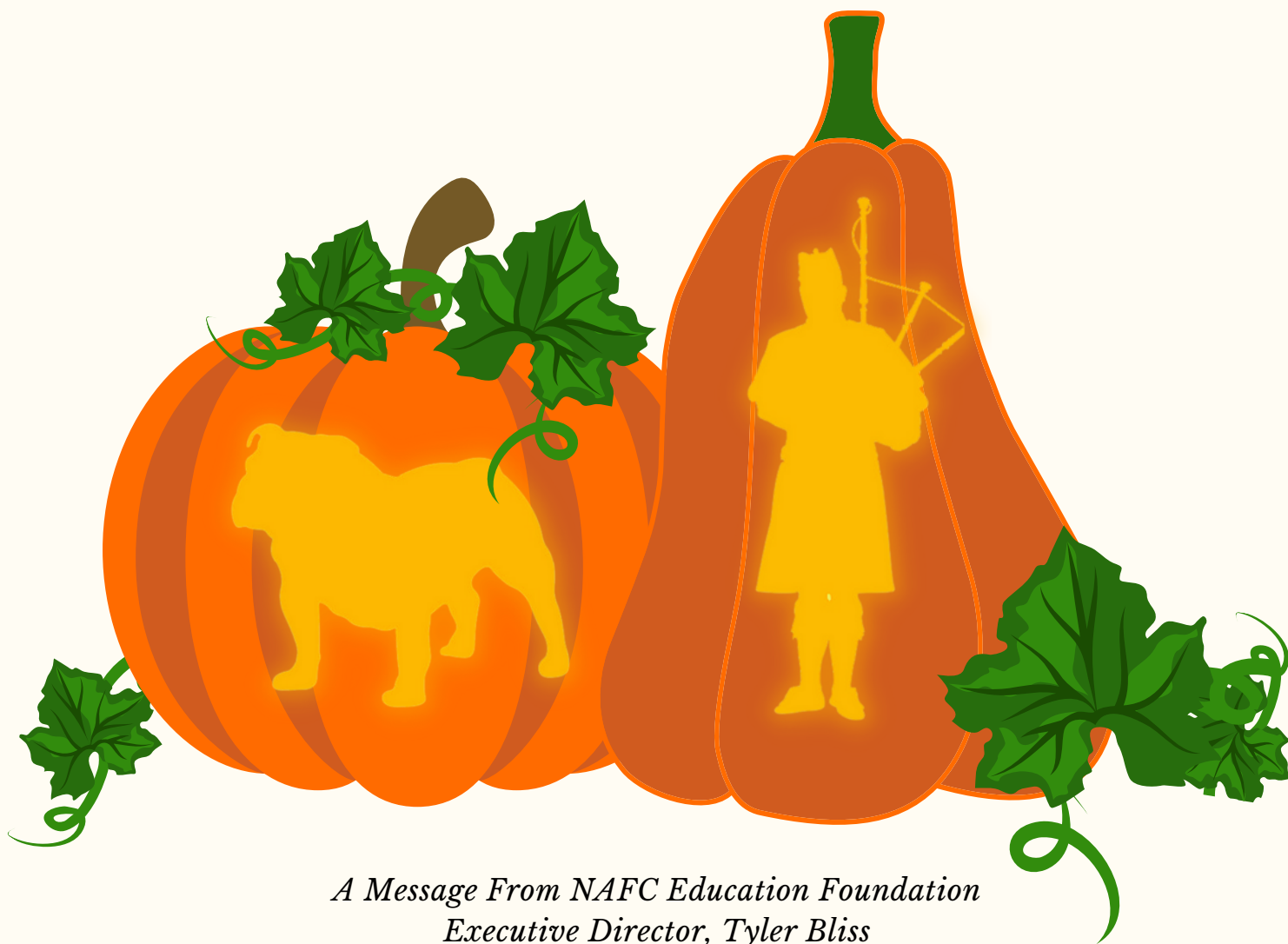


October 2021 Issue No. 13



# LEGACY LEDGER

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER OF LEGACY NAFC



*A Message From NAFC Education Foundation  
Executive Director, Tyler Bliss*

This month's official alumni newsletter is a real TREAT! Alumni spotlights, projects made possible through your Legacy NAFC membership, and more are included as we celebrate another successful month of learning in our outstanding NAFC Schools!

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Again this month, guest contributors have helped to profile our featured FCHS and NAHS heroes. It has allowed me to focus my attention on this introduction. It's a good thing because these two Hall of Famers just can't be mentioned without describing the natural trio they formed with Letty Walter.

Anyone who ever met Sharon Gardner or the late Diana Keithley knows how vital Letty has been... developing girls' sports for sixty-plus years in our community. Thanks to Letty, NAFC girls competed on teams in our elementary schools long before any Lady Bulldogs or Highlanders existed.

Letty worked for NAFC Schools at St. Mary of the Knobs teaching second grade for 36 years, from 1957 to 1993. Early on, she began setting up girls' basketball games with Lafayette, Lillian Emery and more. Nearly a decade passed before any girls' teams appeared in the yearbooks of NAHS or FCHS.



Although she grew up in New Albany, she attended and graduated from Presentation Academy (Louisville) in 1953. It was all because Louisville's parochial schools had basketball and volleyball teams for girls. She also learned about archery and the newly-created "slow-pitch" softball. She earned her degree in education from Nazareth College (now Spalding University) in 1957. She went straight to the only teaching job she ever had. What she never had... was just one job at a time.

Even before college, she worked for the Louisville Parks department as a playground leader. While still in college, she was hired by Sam Peden, director of New Albany Parks and Recreation, as an archery instructor. He inspired her, and in her very first year, she had a good idea that would last her a lifetime. She began assembling and coaching a softball team for girls and women, and then, made history by securing the support of a local organization, the Business and Professional Women's club. Adopting the name BPW Hoosiers, they were hugely successful, including a ten-year run, winning consecutive Louisville Metro area tourney titles.

As you read the two profiles below, know this: if our achievements in life come from standing on the shoulders of giants, Letty Walter was the first and the most important giant in both women's lives.

**Guest editor, Rex Bickers, FCHS 1970**



## **SHARON GARDNER, FCHS 1967-2000**

In its first year, Floyd Central had 20 teams in eight sports, all for boys. Eleven men filled 24 coaching positions. Four of the original faculty taught health and PE. Sharon Gardner was the only woman. For girls, there was only cheerleading. Sharon helped develop a squad of five girls and one boy.

Eight years later, much had changed. The IHSAA first recognized girls' sports in 1974-75. Floyd Central had a lot of new teams: four for boys and thirteen for girls. The 13 girls' teams meant 22 new coaching positions, filled by 7 men and 7 women. They could have used a few more Sharon Gardners. She held five of the 22 varsity or JV assignments. Ultimately, she coached over 1000 athletes in seven sports.

It's an outcome that few would have expected, based on her four years at NAHS. Sharon had no high school sports experience. In fact, she went to Eastern Kentucky State College (renamed ECU in 1966, one year after she graduated) to be in marching band. In addition to the sports that she eventually coached, she was also on the field hockey team (intercollegiate) and intramural teams for tennis and bowling.

Sharon shared decades of experiences with Letty Walter, including FC basketball coaching for the '74-'75 season. Summers with the BPW Hoosiers was the stronger and more enduring connection, and it went far beyond softball. Several players also got the chance to run track in venues such as the Mason-Dixon Games. There were a few girls from the softball team who ran against Olympian Wilma Rudolph.

Long before she retired from Floyd Central, Sharon had become an avid volunteer in countless civic and athletic organizations locally. She was inducted into the FC Hall of Fame in 2013.

Sharon cherishes her three grandchildren and the memory of her late husband Mike, who also refereed, umpired, and coached children's teams. She is very proud of their two sons. David teaches at Renaissance Academy in Clarksville. Daniel's career is focused on diabetes care, providing specialty shoes for elderly patients.

We asked Sharon: who else helped girls' sports come to life at Floyd Central? She replied quickly: "There were three people who helped support every effort to make girls' sports successful. They were our principal, Mr. Lawrence Moore (1907-2004), our AD, Mr. Les Wright, and his secretary, Mrs. Colleen Esarey (1929-2021). They meant the world to me."


**Rex Bickers and guest contributor, Jo Ann Curry Stewart, FCHS 1974**



**DIANA ADAMS KEITHLEY, NAHS '61  
1943-2020**

It is a great honor to share the story of my sister, Diana. While many were saddened by her loss just about a year ago, our family is thrilled to open "the book of Letty, Sharon and Diana". It's great that alumni from both high schools want to keep her memory alive.

Diana was inducted into the NAHS Hall of Fame in 2011. It was the year of her 50th high school reunion. When Letty Walter was a junior in college, Diana was just twelve years old. Soon, both of them were magnetically drawn to the New Albany Parks and Recreation department. By 1960, the BPW Hoosiers had spawned off to include running in track meets. Diana excelled in the 100 yard dash and in 4 x 100 relay.



She could have pursued a track scholarship to college. Instead, she chose to stay home and work. It reflected her family ties and her love of working in the NAFC Parks system. She married Urban (“Urbie”) Keithley in 1964 and right away, she was comfortable being a stay-at-home mother to their daughters Stacy and Shannon. Even so, she soon added involvement in elementary school sports for girls. It would go on to fill twenty years of her life. She also coached FC softball, 1977-80. From her teens in the 1950s, over the next 45 years... there was not a single team that ever had a losing season, with Diana as its coach.

In 1991, Diana hit a turning point in her life, triggered by the way-too-young death of her best softball friend, Jackie Volpert, a '61 Providence grad. From 1992 to 2012, Diana oversaw a scholarship fund set up in Jackie’s memory. For twenty years, it was awarded to a deserving senior on the Providence softball team.

Her accolades in softball have been numerous, but no award ever really matched her two greatest qualities. First, she was phenomenally kind and patient with every girl she ever coached. Second, she was simply the best player/coach the BPW Hoosiers ever had... from her youth right through her whole adult life. That meant a lot because the team was so very, very good.

Editor’s note: I never knew Diana personally, and I only met fellow co-contributor (and sister) Debbie Adwell last month. After Diana’s death, the Tribune published “One in a million”, as the tributes came pouring in, salutes from the lives she touched. I asked Debbie if I could choose one. I picked a quote from Julie Condra (FC '79), a member of FC’s first softball team. Diana had coached that team in 1977. In Julie’s words, “She taught you the meaning of sportsmanship and camaraderie in sports.”

Looking at Diana’s family tree, we see that it’s dotted with educators: husband Urbie, brother David and niece Christi. Maybe, Diana was the greatest teacher in the family. Those who knew her all say: “She taught me how to be a better person.”

**Rex Bickers and guest contributor,  
Debbie Adams Adwell, NAHS 1974**

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# \$11,131 in Classroom Grants Awarded in October



For the third month in a row this school year, Great Classroom Project grants put thousands of dollars in resources into the hands of NAFC teachers and students! In October, 13 projects were funded in NAFC classrooms all across the district. This program has provided over \$65,000 this year and over \$950,000 in classroom resources since 2011. Congratulations to our outstanding educators and thank you to our donors for providing for our students!

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# NAFCS Teachers and Staff Give Big in Annual Campaign Drive



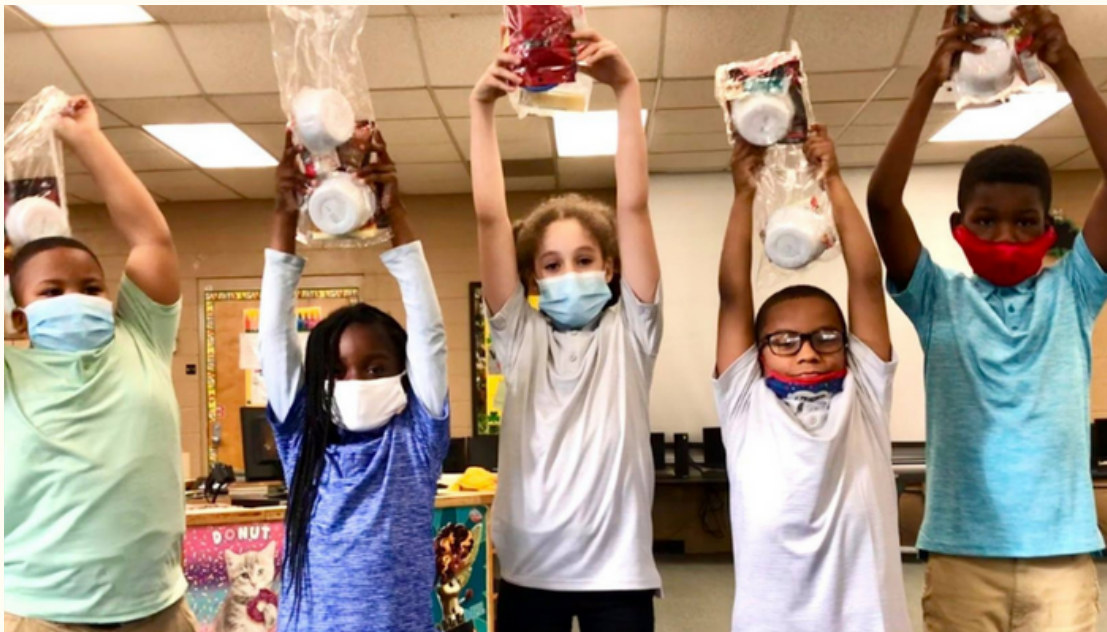
We celebrated big on #FoundationFriday marking the end of the Education Foundation's annual staff campaign drive. We can't thank NAFCS teachers and staff members enough for their generosity. 600 individuals pledged over **\$115,000** to support students and schools in Floyd County through Education Foundation programs.

Congratulations to Slate Run Elementary for having the school with the highest percentage of donors at over 90%!

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# Be A Blessing 5K on November 6th



Support Floyd County Blessings in a Backpack by participating in the inaugural Be A Blessing 5K Family Fun Run on November 6th! Bring your family and friends to walk, jog, or run the course at your own pace and help us fight childhood hunger in Floyd County.

Proceeds of the event will benefit Floyd County Blessings in a Backpack. BIAB Floyd County provides food on weekends for all children in need from preschool to fifth grade at all ten elementary schools and all three middle schools in the New Albany Floyd County School District.

Click [HERE](#) for Event Registration.



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New Albany-Floyd County  
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The New Albany Floyd County Education Foundation is a not-for-profit organization that works in conjunction with NAFC Schools to provide privately funded supplemental resources and programs to students, teachers, and schools. NAFC Alumni Nation is an alumni program of the NAFC Education Foundation. Legacy NAFC is the official support group of NAFC Schools, NAFC Alumni Nation, and the NAFC Education Foundation.



[www.NAFCEdFoundation.org](http://www.NAFCEdFoundation.org)

<https://nafcalumni.nationbuilder.com/>

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