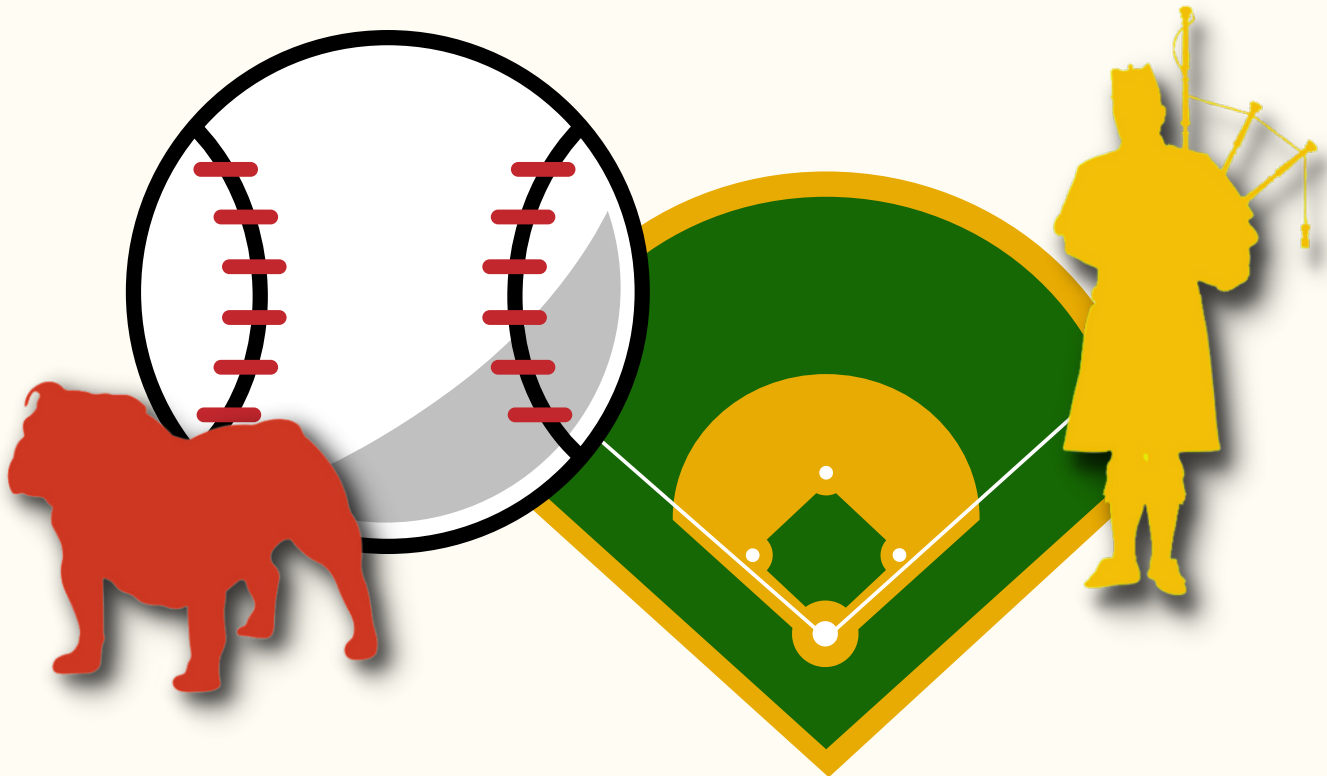


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LEGACY LEDGER

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER OF LEGACY NAFC



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

Spring brings a renewed sense of optimism and a much-deserved break for our NAFC students and educators. It also brings the start of an annual American tradition. What better time to celebrate a remarkable program and coach we spotlighted last October, the first FCHS softball team (1976-77) and its pioneering leader, Diana Adams Keithley, NAHS '61? Thanks to Julie Condra, FCHS '79 and co-contributor Debbie Adams Adwell, NAHS '74, there will be a dedication and celebration for the opening game of the Floyd Central softball season on April 9.

Please click [HERE](#) for more information.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Careers on horseback: There are “horsey” communities all over America. They’re different from one part of the country to another. Still, one key feature is that “everybody knows everybody”. Here, locally, many have ridden in the Pekin Fourth of July parade or on the Hundred Mile Trail Ride. They lead to incredibly strong bonds and frequently, a lot of family ties as well.

The life stories of Tommy Sheets, NAHS '78, and veterinarian Kim Nagel Hennessy, FCHS '74 are actually very different - - until you ask them to take you back to age 10, 11, or 12. How much of the time were you on a horse? Well... a LOT. How much did you dream about getting BACK ON a horse? Even more.

Here’s to a beautiful first week of spring to all you Legacy Ledger readers... and happy trails!

Editor and contributor: Rex Bickers, FCHS '70

TOMMY SHEETS, NAHS '78

There will be many readers of this newsletter who knew... and adored... Tommy’s dearly departed father, Rex Lee Sheets, NAHS '51 (1933-2020) - - perhaps more than there are readers who know Tommy himself. From a very early age, he lived and breathed for the hours he spent around horses. He had a life that many kids can only imagine in their dreams, both in the saddle and in the barn. He took that to heart throughout much of his career, seeking to help get other kids involved with horses.



What you might not expect to learn is this: a key factor in shaping Tommy's career came from his years at NAHS. He credits his high school counselor - - and New Albany Hall-of-Famer (2007), the late Louis Jensen, class of '46 (1927-2013) for helping him to follow his passion and believe in his dream of becoming a professional horse trainer.

By 1985, he began accepting both horses and riders for training and soon, Tommy Sheets Show Horses had its first National Champion. Over the next four decades, Tommy and the horses he trained were perennial winners at "the (annual) Congress" (of the American Quarter Horse Association). His career record is stunning: World Champions, Reserve World Champions, and a total of 40 overall wins. As recently as October 2021, he won the John Gammon Memorial Challenge of Champions trophy, awarded by the Kentuckiana Ranch Horse Association.

It's been hard for Tommy to fit "slowing down" into his vocabulary. Will Tommy slow down? Will he get his wife, Leslie (NAHS '81) to slow down? Leslie is a ten-time marathoner, and her interior design shop (Leslie Lewis and Associates), is the home of "championship" level service in its own right. Stay tuned.

I asked Tommy to tell me more about teenagers and horses. He replied "being a teenager is tough for lots of kids. For some, it can be transformational to get involved with horses. Sure, it's a privilege to see a talented thirteen-year-old become a champion. But we have also helped many young guys and gals who were struggling with adolescence. It's been very gratifying to be part of their experiences."

KIM NAGEL HENNESSY, FCHS '74

If you knew Kim and Tommy in the sixth grade... and anyone asked "which kid is the bookish one?", all the answers would have surely been the same: "Oh, Kim, definitely!" But ask Kim today, "What shaped your career plans the most in your youth?" and she might surprise you. ride.

Make no mistake: Floyd Central prepared her very, very well for Purdue (B.S. Animal Sciences '78, DVM '81). She was a National Merit Scholar and she "lived in the library"



at FC. As for her brain - - it belonged to her schoolwork. But her heart surely belonged to having (access to) a horse and being able to ride.

Kim was ten years old when her family moved to Floyds Knobs in 1966. A nearby neighbor, Lt. Colonel Richard Elsler was 61 at the time. He lived on Highway 150, literally across the road from Kim's family. Colonel Elsler had joined the Army in 1940 at age 35 and spent much of WW II in France as a (horseback) cavalry officer. He had two horses and essentially kept the second one for Kim. She figures they went on hundreds of miles of trail rides together. It really got horses into her blood.

She thought she might pursue equine veterinary care, but found that she was actually quite good at surgery and office-based (small animal) practice. Married to Joel Hennessy (NAHS '77), a geologist with Exxon, the couple did quite a bit of relocating, before settling near Philadelphia. It's where Kim now has her dream farm, fulfilling her passion for horses as a hobby. She has been a consistent champion in local and regional equestrian competitions (both English and Western). She has earned the admiration of her own community by doing literally thousands of surgeries (neutering/spaying) for a local "rescue" group called Cat Angels, before retiring in 2020. She now spends more time than ever on horseback.

I asked Kim how she came to love science. How did she decide to become a veterinarian?

She replied "My Floyd Central teachers were great, especially (the late) Ray Weatherholt for biology." But...that said, she went on... "My role model, without a doubt, was Dr. Steve Banet." On Saturdays, he would let Kim ride along when he did "farm calls". She recalls "he did absolutely everything, from farm animals to pets. I wanted to be just like him."



Kim Hennessy



Tommy Sheets

BIG Results from the Education Celebration! Gala on Friday, March 4th



On Friday, March 4th we were able to return in person to our annual gala, the Education Celebration! What a remarkable night it was for our NAFC students, teachers, and schools. Thank you to our sponsors, attendees, bidders, donors, and volunteers for helping us to raise RECORD-BREAKING net proceeds! The funds raised that night will fund classroom resources through Great Classroom Projects, free books through the Imagination Library Projects, free meals through Blessings in a Backpack, 5th and 7th-grade visits to the Junior Achievement campus, and much more.



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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.



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