

December 2022 Issue No. 28



LEGACY LEDGER

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER OF LEGACY NAFC



*A Message From NAFC Education Foundation
Alumni Coordinator, Sherri McKeen*

When we crowned the 2022 NAFC Legacy Royal Court winner on December 9th, we were celebrating all New Albany High School and Floyd Central High School alumni. If you were able to join us at the NA vs. FC boys basketball game, you surely noticed the many alumni who filled the stands. It is this continued engagement of our graduates that makes a difference! *The event was highlighted with a video in the December 16th NAFC Success email: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1UvyxkTPIE>.*

In the new year, we are excited to continue the work of the NAFC Education Foundation with the support of our graduates, teachers, students, families, and community partners. Through your support, the Foundation can reinvest in our schools and be a key player in the future of the New Albany-Floyd County community.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



Here's the usual pattern of Alumni Spotlight: we feature two legendary members of our alumni communities, one from NAHS, one from FCHS. So, here's a question for all of our regular readers: has it occurred often... or seldom... that you were already familiar with the names of those profiled here? One of them? or both? We'd like to hear from you.

For our December issue, chances are... that many readers already know the names of Les Wright or Don Unruh - - maybe both of them. Since 1967, they have provided a combined total of 71 years of service to Highlanders and Bulldogs... first as teachers and coaches, then as athletic directors for nearly five decades.

Introduction and profiles contributed by Rex Bickers, FCHS '70

Welcome to a conversation with two athletic directors.

We've used a different approach to tell these career stories: two men who wore the title of "AD". We've intentionally woven together various reflections. Some elements are similar... others distinctly contrasting. You might learn things you don't already know.

Q: Can you describe your path to becoming AD? Was it a career goal long before you took the job?



LES WRIGHT
Floyd Central
faculty/staff
1967-1996

LES: I went from Borden High School (1958) to Indiana University, earning my bachelor's degree (education) in 1962, with one goal: to teach high school biology. I never quite got there. In 1967, Floyd Central opened. By then, I had five years' experience as a junior high science teacher in Madison, and I had my master's degree (also IU). I was hired to teach junior high science at FC. I also cut my teeth in coaching as an assistant to Joe Cerqueira (football) and to Joe Hinton (basketball). After three years, I was asked to succeed Jack Johnson as FC Athletic Director.

I hardly knew what the job was! My duties spanned 24 boys' teams in grades 7 to 12, plus two girls' teams (both varsity only). There were also varsity and JV cheerleaders. I had the same teaching load in my first year as AD and no administrative assistant.

DON: Comparing the road that Les traveled... to mine... the differences were huge. I came to the job in year 21 of my teaching career (English). I'd been a coach every year from 1978 to 1987, and during my first twelve years at NAHS. I had already coached high school basketball, before I returned to New Albany. I jumped right in... as soccer coach and assistant basketball coach to Jim Miller. I succeeded Jim for three years, 1995-1998. - - including going to state with the 'Dogs my first year. Losing the final game to Ben Davis High School came **in double overtime...** with a 30-footer at the buzzer. Just getting over that, my dear friend Gary Austin (AD 1986-1998) was a big help.

It also helped a lot that Gary prepared me to succeed him. Of course, the job was already well defined. I needed that. I had very big shoes to fill. Still, I had this advantage: I grew up in the shadows of three giants: Gary, Alex Thom and Stan Sajko.



DON UNRUH
NAHS '74
New Albany
faculty/staff
1987-2019

Q: How did high school sports change during your tenure as AD?

Les: Title IX changed everything in 1972. The IHSAA caught up by 1974 and what had been two sports for girls became nine. Floyd Central began a program for students interested in becoming athletic trainers, now in its 50th year (involving both male and female students since 1981). And the nearly “omni-victorious” (national level) Dazzlers began during my era.

DON: During my tenure, one of the most rewarding changes, in my opinion... was IHSAA’s addition of Unified Track and Field (2015). Both high schools adopted it. Unified sports programs give special needs students the opportunity to compete in athletics and earn varsity letters alongside student-partners. Another big change for the NAHS athletic department was the arrival of Romeo Langford. I feel confident about this: living through three seasons like Romeo’s sophomore, junior and senior years just might remain a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Season ticket sales tripled, each game was sold out before we opened the gates, and long lines for autographs stretched through the NAHS hallways!

Q: What aspects of your job would surprise the public

LES and **DON**, jointly: The AD is a CFO and a COO and “*almost* a CEO”. How is that true? Well... the school board, our principals and the NAFCS administration keep us (mostly) in our place and protect us from many executive matters. Most likely, the public has very little awareness of how an athletic department is a *lean* business unit running literally on shoestrings. We certainly both wish that someone could control the cost of a football helmet!

Q: How did your career impact your family life?

LES: The successes of teams and individual athletes are great - - but yes, some days are tough. The hours are long. You have to view them through the right lens. There are so many joys that can brighten the worst of times. One reward I never expected is this: having a son in an athletic administrative position (with the NCAA). To date, we are the only father-son FC Hall of Fame inductees (L.J. Wright, FCHS '86, 2017 Hall of Fame inductee). I believe that the NAHS Hall of Fame has three such duos: Willmans, Chapalas and Renshaws.

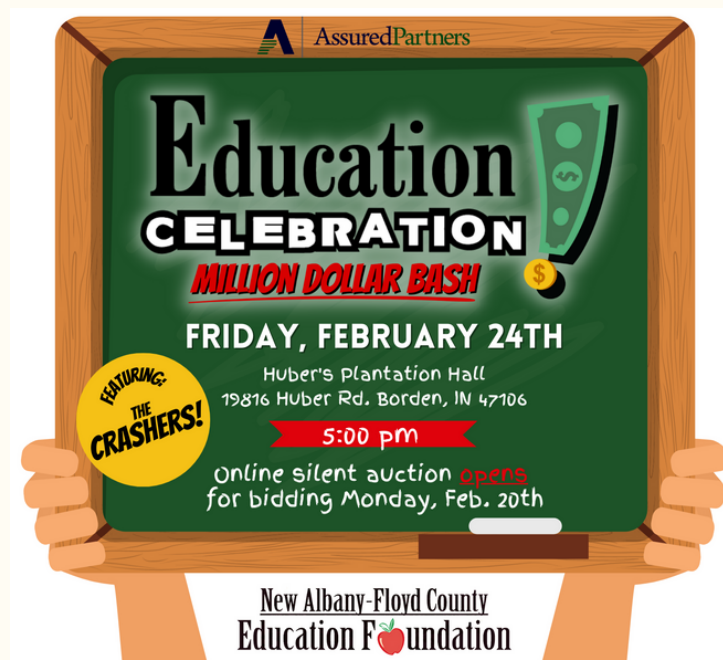
DON: I’m nearly a generation younger than Les. My decision to retire is based partly on the family life that lies ahead for me and my wife Denise. We have four grandchildren: twin grandsons, five years old this year - - a little brother, age three - - and our new baby granddaughter, who is six months old.

Q: Looking back at your career, were there specific individuals or things that left a lasting impact on you?

LES: I could never properly distill down the names of coaches, students, athletic trainers, teachers and staff. So, I'd like to salute the profession itself. Two organizations: the IAAA (Indiana Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association) and its national counterpart (NIAAA) have been very important in my career. The IAAA formed in 1971, the same year that I became the AD. In 1978, its members elected me president. It was the same year that NIAAA was created (from a smaller, less extensive group). The IAAA has gone on to be the leading AD association across the entire USA. In 2010, I was humbled to have the honor of induction into the NIAAA Hall of Fame. These two organizations have provided a vital and professional career home to me and to so many great friends who are members. I've been lucky to remain active in both since I retired. I continue to chair the NIAAA Retired Athletic Directors committee.

DON: I really want to recognize and thank the dedicated, hard-working NAHS coaches... plus the athletic department staff of Marlene Stephens, Jim King, and John Breeding. What a pleasure it has been to work with them! Moreover, the Bulldog fans make this such a great place to be. Some walk a few blocks down Vincennes Street; some get on buses and ride all over everywhere with us. Home or away, they always impress us... and our opponents... with their fierce school pride and good sportsmanship. I have a bright and shining vision of the future for our grandchildren and their grandchildren - - singing "Hail N-A-H-S" into the next century.

SAVE THE DATE



2023 EC! Sponsor and Ticket information:

<https://one.bidpal.net/EDUCATIONCELEBRATION/welcome>



THANK YOU!



From left to right: Dan Williamson (NA '79), Danielle Periago (NA '96), Courtney Lewis (NA '03), Justin Endres (NA '96), Scarlett Shine (FC '14), Kate Burger (FC '87), Julie Libs [filling in for Bobby Libs (FC '85)], Jennie Olmstead (FC '94)

These eight prestigious alumni competed in the first annual Legacy NAFC Royal Court and raised more than \$42,000 for the students and educators of NAFC schools.

One Royal Court candidate, Justin Endres (NAHS '96), earned the crown for raising the most money for the campaign. Justin secured more than \$7500 to further the mission of the NAFC Education Foundation.

Huge thank you to each of our 2022 Royal Court candidates and to those who supported their pursuit of the crown.

Alumni still interested in giving to the Education Foundation and becoming members of the Legacy NAFC, please submit your donation with the [annual giving form](#).



Over \$88,000 in Classroom Grants Awarded in 2022



Congratulations to the 10 NAFCS educators who received funding for their classrooms through our Great Classroom Project grant opportunity in December. This brings the total funded this school year to over \$88,000!

Great Classroom Projects are made possible through the generous support of our donors. Thank you for your investment in Floyd County classrooms!

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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. Legacy NAFC is the official support group of NAFCS, NAFC Alumni Nation, and the NAFC Education Foundation.

www.NAFCEdFoundation.org/alumni

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