September 2026 Issue No. 73

LEGACY LEDGER

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER OF LEGACY NAFC ALUMNI



A Message from the NAFC Education Foundation

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What makes this community special is the people who show up for it.

Last week, the NAFC Education Foundation took part in Give for Good, and our community once again showed up in a big way. Together, we raised $23,245, including support from two generous $5,000 matching sponsors, First Merchants Bank and an anonymous donor.

That support allows the Education Foundation to continue funding programs like our Great Classroom Grants and Mental Health Grants. Keep reading to see some of the projects we were able to fund this month.

And speaking of the people who make this community special, I recently had the chance to sit down with the athletic directors at New Albany and Floyd Central, both proud NAFCS graduates. I hope you enjoy getting to know them and hearing about the paths that brought them back to serve the schools that helped shape them.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Shawn Garmon (NAHS ‘91) and **Matt Brown (NAHS ‘91)** go way back.

They first met as elementary school students at Mt. Tabor, sometimes spending more nights at each other’s houses than their own. Middle school took them in different directions, but they ended up back together at New Albany High School.

Now they’re together again in a different way. Garmon took over the New Albany athletic department in 2024. This summer, Brown became Floyd Central’s athletic director. Two old friends. Two rival high schools. One school district.

And both care deeply about what happens beyond the scoreboard. They want strong teams, of course. But they also want athletes who represent their schools well, coaches who build real relationships with kids, and programs that students are proud to be part of.

There’s something pretty fitting about two NAFC alumni, friends since childhood, now helping shape athletics for the next generation.

Coming home to lead the Bulldogs: Shawn Garmon (NAHS ‘91)



Shawn Garmon refers to his time as a student at New Albany High School as the best years of his life.

“It’s the friends I made,” he said. Two different middle schools fed into NAHS, so there was a whole new set of classmates to meet. Garmon has always thought that was part of what made New Albany special, with its mix of backgrounds and the way it pushed you to meet people you might not have otherwise.

One of those new faces, it turned out, wasn’t new at all. Matt Brown, his friend from Mt. Tabor, was back in the mix. Garmon calls the fact that they’ve ended up running rival athletic departments exactly what it is: timing. “It’s a love of sports, a love of young people, a love of coaching,” he said of what he and Brown still share.

At NAHS, one teacher left a mark on Garmon before he ever coached a game himself: John Buerger, who taught economics and coached baseball. Buerger was tough, the kind of coach where you don’t realize until years later he was really teaching you life lessons. Punctuality. Teamwork. Hard work. Those are the things that still show up in how Garmon leads.

In his senior year, Garmon played for assistant basketball coach Don Unruh under head coach Jim Miller. Decades later, he'd follow "Donnie" straight into the athletic director's office. Unruh served as New Albany's Athletic Director from 1999 to 2019 and returned for a year as interim AD before Garmon got the job in 2024. "He's a legend," Garmon said. Garmon calls himself "a sponge" for everything the man had to teach.

Garmon played both basketball and baseball at NAHS. Before that, he was a kid at Jack Ford's basketball camps and John Buerger's baseball camps, the kind of camps where, as he told the News and Tribune in 2024, the head coach already knew his name at 10 or 11 years old. That feeling of being seen is something he now tries to build into New Albany's youth pipeline. He pushes his coaches to build relationships with athletes and their parents starting at the earliest camps and leagues, long before any kid puts on a Bulldog uniform. "It's not about the team," he said of his focus as AD. "It's about the program," one that starts in elementary school and doesn't let go.

Garmon was a three-year starter in baseball at Indiana University Southeast. Then Chris McIntyre took over as New Albany's new baseball coach, and the chance to come home and coach under him was enough that Garmon walked away from his final year of eligibility at IUS to be his assistant. It set the course for everything after. He finished his education degree, started subbing at NAHS, and landed his first full-time job split between Hazelwood Middle School and NAHS, teaching social studies. A year as assistant varsity baseball coach turned into the head JV coach.

Garmon taught social studies at NAHS for nine years before life pulled him somewhere else. In 2004, his family needed help running their business, Wooded Glen Retreat and Conference Center. His mother asked. He prayed on it. "Life is full of seasons," he said, and stepping away from the classroom felt like the season he was in. He ran the retreat center for more than 15 years. He doesn't see that chapter as separate from where he is now. Hospitality, he said, isn't so different from hosting sports. Both come down to taking care of people, being present, making sure everyone has a good experience.

After the family sold the business, Garmon was self-employed when the New Albany AD job came open. He talked it over with his wife, Julie, and their kids, since it was a big commitment. Julie's answer settled it: "Our life is there." He went up against other strong candidates for the job and got it.

For Garmon, this isn't a stop on the way to somewhere else. It's where he wants to stay. When he took over, the school was looking for the same things he'd been building toward for years: real alignment from elementary school through high school, and some fresh spirit at NAHS. Out of that came a new identity for the student section, the Dog Pound.

Ask Garmon what he wants people saying about New Albany athletics five years from now, and winning is only part of the answer. He wants his coaches asking themselves whether they're leaving an imprint on their athletes, whether those kids want to come back to NAHS someday, whether alumni still feel connected to the place. "Did we leave it better than we found it?" is the question he keeps coming back to, about coaching, sure, but just as much about how everyone in a Bulldog uniform treats officials, opponents, each other. He wants kids proud to put on the jersey too, because wearing it is a privilege everyone who wore it first had to earn.

At home, Garmon and his wife, Julie, who works as assistant to the assistant principals at NAHS, are raising three sons in the same Bulldog world Shawn grew up in. Tyson graduated from NAHS in 2025 and now studies kinesiology at the University of Louisville after playing soccer and volleyball for the Bulldogs. Tanner is a current NAHS senior who plays soccer and basketball. Trevor, a sophomore, plays soccer, basketball, and golf.

He's not chasing a stopping point. He's just trying to leave the chair a little better than he found it, the same way Buerger and Unruh did for him.

A Bulldog leading the Highlanders: Matt Brown (NAHS ‘91)



Matt Brown remembers New Albany High School feeling small in the best way. Everyone knew everyone. School spirit ran deep.

One teacher made an impression that outlasted the classroom. Ms. Kupferer taught math. Brown remembers her as sarcastic, fun, never one to take herself or the class too seriously. He didn’t want to disappoint her, and some of his best memories of actually liking school trace back to her classroom. Years later, when he became a teacher himself, her relationship with students was the one he tried to recreate.

When Brown was weighing whether to apply for the Floyd Central athletic director job, he spent a morning with Garmon at NAHS, talking through what mattered for NAFC sports. Garmon was a sounding board as Brown prepared for his interview. Does having a friend from childhood running a rival program change how Brown feels about the rivalry? Not even a little, he said. Both of them can win. Both of them can back each other up.

In college, Brown spent four years as a student manager for Denny Crum’s basketball program at the University of Louisville, traveling with the team to NCAA tournament games as far away as California. Watching Crum up close taught him more than basketball. “It doesn’t matter who you are; if you’re talking to Denny, he makes you feel like you’re the only person in the room,” Brown said. He learned from Crum the importance of staying organized, setting goals, and keeping an eye on tomorrow without losing sight of today.

Brown wanted to work with kids from the start. He studied education in college because teaching felt like the place he could actually make a difference. Then came 27 years across several schools and roles before Floyd Central ever entered the picture. He started as a fifth-grade teacher outside of Indianapolis, teaching every subject. Then sixth-grade English and language arts, with basketball and football coaching on the side. Three years as athletic director and Dean of Students at Parkview. Math at River Valley Middle School, coaching girls’ basketball and football along the way.

His first athletic director job at Parkview taught him plenty, including the importance of staying organized, communicating constantly, setting expectations high enough that people notice, and making sure everyone understands what’s expected of them. He’s carried all of it into Floyd Central.

Floyd Central’s athletic director job wasn’t something Brown had chased for years. It just turned into his dream job once it was in front of him. When the position opened this past summer, he knew it

was now or never. Floyd Central has had only a handful of athletic directors in more than fifty years. Unlike Garmon's job at New Albany, the FC role comes paired with an assistant principal title, so Brown also oversees the school's PE and health teachers and classes.

Before accepting the position, Brown sat down with his wife, Christa, a 1993 New Albany High School graduate, to talk through both the demands of the job and the opportunity that came with it. They knew the role would require long hours, sacrifice from their family, and a willingness to live with public scrutiny. In the end, they agreed Floyd Central was the right place for Brown to serve and make an impact. on being around long enough to see it through.

Brown wants to build something specific, a program with a clear standard of sportsmanship. He calls it the Highlander Way, a motto he built around S.C.O.R.E., which stands for sportsmanship, character, organization, recognition, and excellence. He's also modernizing how the department shows up in public through a new website, official Facebook, Instagram, and X accounts with daily posts designed to keep people engaged. The night the NAFCS board approved his hiring, Brown talked about keeping Floyd Central's tradition of winning alive while doing it the right way. Living the Highlander Way.

Brown didn't grow up a Highlander. His connection to Floyd Central built itself over 20 years living in the district, watching both of his kids come up through Greenville Elementary and Highland Hills Middle School before FCHS. His daughter, Julianna, graduated from Floyd Central in 2026. His son, Harrison, is a senior now, playing golf for the Highlanders. Brown wants to immerse himself in the whole Floyd Central community. Athletics is part of that. So is everything else that comes with being a Highlander.

Five years from now, Brown wants Floyd Central's athletic department known as one program, "all one FC program," as he calls it. Athletes from every sport showing up for each other. Sportsmanship being the thing people notice first. He wants a kid putting on a Highlander uniform to feel proud, plain and simple. "Man, this is awesome," is the reaction he's chasing. "This is phenomenal."

Brown isn't short on plans. Already underway: relocated softball fields for 2027, a rebuilt baseball field for 2028, new bleachers and a renovated press box at the football stadium, gyms getting renovated in time for this fall, and a 45,000-square-foot student activity center going up right now. Down the road, he wants new male and female versions of the Highlander mascot, an interactive touchscreen exhibit on Floyd Central sports history and its hall of fame, and digital lighting that can project images onto the basketball court.

None of it happens overnight. Brown knows that. He's planning on being around long enough to see it through.

Be A Blessing | 5K & 1M Fun Run

Blessings in a Backpack Floyd County is hosting its 6th Annual Be A Blessing 5K & 1M Fun Run on Saturday, October 24 at 9:00 AM, Sam Peden Community Park. Run it, walk it, push a stroller through it. The money raised goes straight to the weekend food packets that feed more than 2,000 NAFC students throughout the school year, a program your Legacy NAFC gifts already help fund.

Event details:

- Date: Saturday, October 24, 2026
- Time: 9:00 AM
- Location: Sam Peden Community Park, New Albany
- Register by October 3 to guarantee your event t-shirt
- Finisher medals for every participant, while supplies last



Grab your family, your classmates, or your old team and register at runsignup.com/Race/IN/NewAlbany/BeABlessing5K.

Interested in sponsoring the race? Reach Blessings in a Backpack Floyd County directly at floydcountyblessings@gmail.com.

Great Classroom Grants: September Awards



This month, the NAFC Education Foundation awarded $47,924 in Great Classroom Grants to bring new ideas and opportunities to life in our New Albany Floyd County School classrooms. This brings our total to more than $102,700 in funded Great Classroom Grants this school year.

Here are a few of this month's highlights:

- **S. Ellen Jones** – Speech and language students will benefit from new therapy materials to support individual and small group sessions across the elementary and preschool population.
- **Floyd Central High School** – Family and Consumer Sciences students will cook and learn with new and replacement equipment in the FACS kitchens.
- **New Albany High School** – Principles of Biomedical Sciences students will use new CPR supplies to train for and pass their CPR certification exam.
- **Green Valley Elementary** – Kindergarten students will have new math manipulatives, leveled readers, and self-regulation tools like weighted vests and floor cushions to support learning and focus.
- **Floyds Knobs Elementary** – First graders are getting their own hands-on STEM lab, built through a grant called "Little Thinkers, Big Ideas."
- **Highland Hills Middle School** – Seventh-grade Honors readers will dig into class sets of And Then There Were None and Refugee.

These are just a few of the 65 projects made possible this month, thanks to community support and dedicated educators.



Mental Classroom Grants: September Awards

This month, the NAFC Education Foundation awarded **$14,362 in Mental Health Grants** to support the well-being of students and staff across the district. This brings our 2026 total to **$66,546** in funded Mental Health Grants.

Here is a look at this month's funded projects:

Georgetown Elementary – Teachers are bringing in the CharacterStrong program to guide students through social and emotional learning.

Green Valley Elementary – Kindergartners will start each day with a new Morning Meeting and Emotional Wellness Station, complete with a student microphone and speaker for sharing.

Slate Run Elementary

- One grant will help cover therapy costs for students whose families don't have Medicaid or the means to pay for outside services on their own.
- A second grant is bringing musical instruments into the classroom, giving students a hands-on way to build emotional awareness and healthy coping skills.

Floyd Central High School

- Counselors are building out a Flex & Focus intervention period with CharacterStrong curriculum, giving students dedicated time each day to work on the skills that make everything else easier.
- A second grant will supply fidgets for students working through the loss of phone access during the school day.

That's six grants this month, thanks to community support and educators who noticed what their students needed.



JOIN US ON FACEBOOK!

Stay updated on your Floyd County classmates, discover thrilling events in your NAFC school community, and learn firsthand about the NAFC Education Foundation by connecting with us at facebook.com/LegacyNAFCAlumni.

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 alumni support group of the NAFC Education Foundation and New Albany Floyd County Schools.

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www.NAFCEdFoundation.org/alumni

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