

improving

THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

AVD Hall of Fame member Chris Slattery '79 has brought her competitive spirit to the educational realm

by Michele Tinker, Director of Annual Giving

Thirty years after graduation, Chris Slattery '79 is still competing. Where once she channeled her competitive nature into basketball, today she is applying it to improving the educational experience for both students and teachers. Her career in education has spanned teaching physical education, health and business classes, coaching and serving as elementary principal for 12 years, to most recently stepping into the position of curriculum director of the Paulding County School District.

Chris grew up in Hicksville, Ohio, where she was very active in sports. She was a member of the high school basketball team that had an undefeated season her senior year, 1975. She has always regretted that the state women's basketball tournament did not start until the following year.

Chris's decision to come to DC was a result of being recruited by Coach Duane "Scout" Hocking. Scout set up the college visit, and arranged for two student athletes, Tena Behnfeldt and Sue Roughton (now Dangler) to show Chris around campus. "That personal contact started before I was even a student there." Both women remain close friends of hers to this day.

Talking about her time at Defiance, Chris said, "I had the best time of my life there. I became good friends with a lot of the people I competed with during high school." At DC she found a strong women's basketball program. She earned four varsity letters in basketball and one in volleyball at Defiance, was team captain, and named Most Valuable Player. During her senior year, the basketball team captured a third place finish in the State, (this was before conference affiliations had been established) and she was recognized as the Female Athlete of the Year. Chris was inducted into the AVD Hall of Fame at the

1996 DC Homecoming

Since Defiance College was close to Hicksville, her parents could attend her games. But it wasn't too close to home for Chris. "You could make that 25 miles as far away as you wanted," she said laughing.

Chris entered college planning on a physical education major. Along the way, she decided she needed "something else," as she put it, so she acquired a double major: Comprehensive Business Education along with Physical Education and Health.

"All of those worlds of education I have put to good use," Slattery confirmed.

Her first job was in Antwerp, where Chris taught typing, shorthand, office practice, phys. ed. and health, while coaching volleyball, basketball and track.

Looking back, Chris shook her head. "I never batted an eye going into it. Now, when I think of all the work!" She frequently found herself grading papers and doing lesson plans on the bus heading to games. That's just what you do when you love your career, according to Chris.

Her friend Sue Dangler recruited her to Paulding to teach phys. ed. and to coach with Sue. It was at this time that she pursued her master's in Educational Administration from Indiana University at Ft. Wayne, thanks to the encouragement of her principal. She also secured her superintendent's certificate through the University of Dayton at Lima.

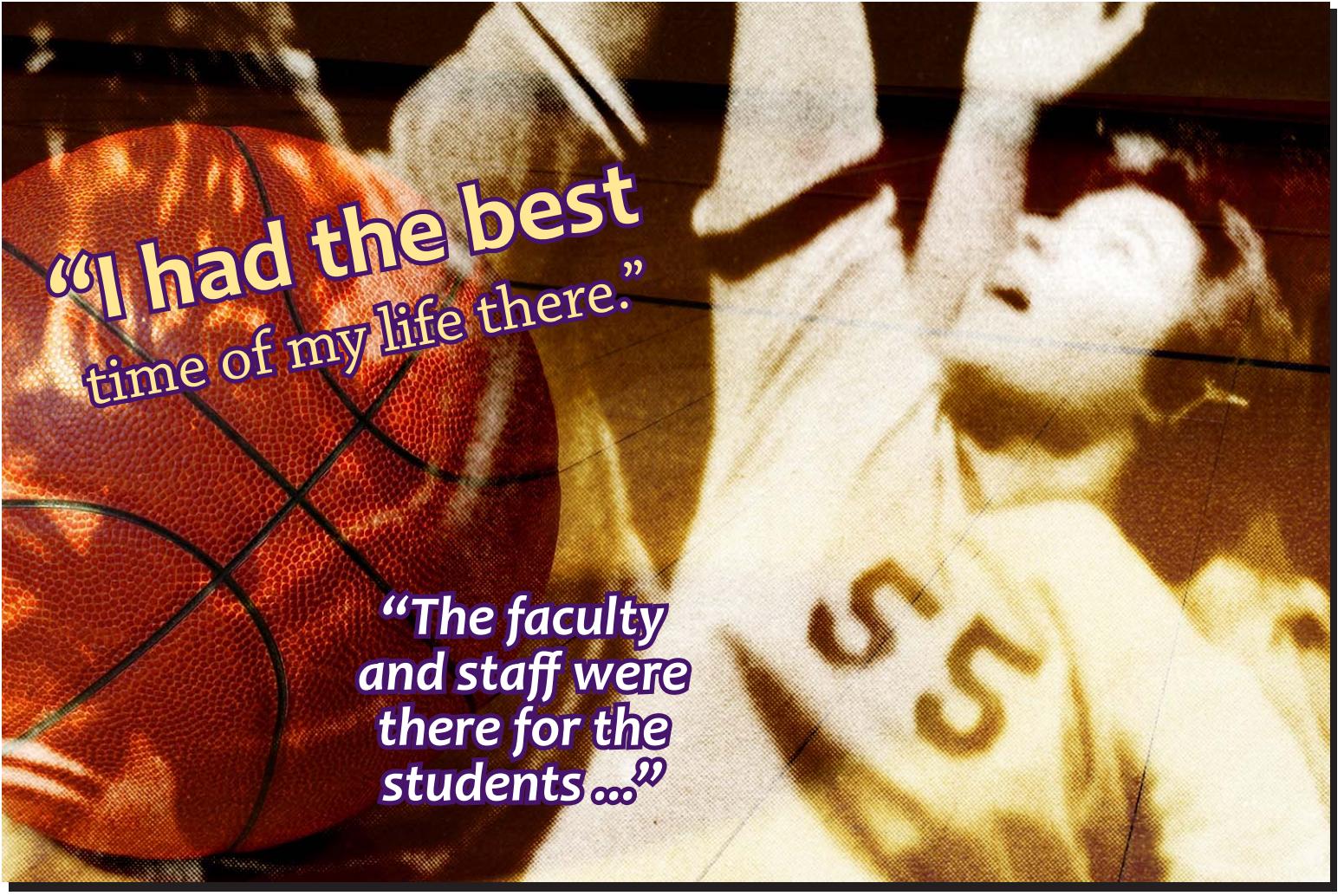
The year she completed her administrative certificate, she accepted the position of principal at the Mark Center School. The building closed that year but, this experience made her realize

she wanted to pursue an administrative career. After a stint in the Columbus area, the offer of the principal's job at Oakwood Elementary School in the Paulding School District brought her back home to northwest Ohio. One of the biggest challenges she faced in that position: the Paulding school district went through the school facilities construction process, and at Oakwood, she got to participate in that process as a new elementary building was built. Calling it an excellent learning experience, she thinks she would relish being part of such a project again.

Chris stepped up to the position of curriculum coordinator for the district just this fall. It was a hard move to make, but she



Chris Slattery '79



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realized that if she has her sights set on being a superintendent some day, she needs central office experience.

“I miss daily interaction with the kids, but this is opening so many new doors,” Chris explained. She’s getting new insight into the financial and curriculum aspects of education. There are many hats attached to this job as well, and she is enjoying the chance to be in a learning situation again. Right now, her to-do list includes adopting a new math textbook series, working on professional development opportunities for the district’s teachers, and assisting food service with their plans to start a breakfast program next year.

As curriculum coordinator, her goal for the district is to see it achieve an excellent rating on the state report card. Paulding has received an effective rating for several years, and Chris admits her natural competitiveness is pushing her to see the district hit the excellent mark.

Chris enjoys spending her free time with her family: her parents, Dick and Nancy Slattery, three siblings – Joni, Ricki and Mitch, and their families, and her

grandmother. She is a regular fixture at all the Paulding High School sporting events. Her favorite thing in the world, however, is her dune buggy. Chris built it from scratch and rides as often as possible at the Silver Lake, Michigan sand dunes, something she’s done for the past nine years.

Defiance College is still part of her life as well. Chris still meets with a group of other DC graduates, who call themselves “The Girls of January.” Every January for the past 26 years, these sorority sisters have gotten together for an energetic reunion weekend.

Chris has also served on the Alumni Varsity D Executive Board of Defiance College for many years. She explained that she enjoys the opportunity to help with decisions to make the athletic department the best it can be, because it was such a large part of her life.

Discussing the growth in opportunities she’s seen for the women athletes, Chris cited the increase in the number of games played, the divisions, and the conference schedules. She related that she is pleased that DC has changed with the times. She also believes

that the college is “pulling out all the stops” to attract a wide range of students, pointing to the new autism studies program as an example.

Slattery also worked with several other alumni to create the Duane Hocking endowment. As she related her involvement in this project, she said “I have so much respect for Scout, that there was a natural drive to see that project succeed.” Succeed it did. After its establishment in 2002, the fund provides an annual scholarship to a student majoring in sport science who has demonstrated leadership on campus.

Chris goes back to the individual attention she received at Defiance College, as a big part of her education. “The faculty and staff were there for the students, academically or otherwise – you’d even see them at your activities. That made being a DC student very special.”

She describes getting her education at DC as “so much fun,” in no small part due to her competitive spirit. Chris believes that at DC, her fellow students challenged her both in the classroom and in sports, as much as she challenged herself. ♦