

Honoring COACH FAY

To Sir With Love

BY LISA STAMOS || PHOTOGRAPHY BY LINDA M. BARRETT

LUCKY ARE THE PEOPLE who know their life's purpose. Edward Fay, known to most as Coach Fay, is one of those lucky ones. He steps into each day as a driving force for positive development of children, helping them navigate their world. His charges are students at Saint Anne Parish School in Barrington where he serves as athletic director. He's contributed his brand of leadership for 15 years—an entire generation of students.

Watching Coach Fay in action, you notice how he interacts with students, offering a laugh, encouragement, teaching moments, or feedback on sports. He is fully present and available in his interactions with students. Every. Single. One.

Coach Fay credits his mother, Debra Lewis, for her clarity of values, the ones he models for his students. Be honest, be clear, respect everyone. Words to live by. Students know he has their backs. He is their trusted guide.

In the 1967 movie, "To Sir With Love", Sidney Poitier plays a teacher who faces challenging at-risk students. Coach Fay sees his students as being at-risk, though not in ways you

might think. "Kids need to be kids again," he says. "We need to listen to them, give them positive feedback. Parents need to be parents, and not try to be their children's friends."

Born in Dallas, Coach Fay fine-tuned his child mentoring skills as the creator of a youth development pilot program that partnered with the University of Illinois. At-risk students had the chance to take a canoe trip, as well as other opportunities, giving them a platform to strengthen their mindset and become more resilient.

Later in his career, he was noticed by members of Saint Anne while coaching their children—basketball players in Barrington middle schools. He was invited to interview at Saint Anne by "the little Nun" and was hired. The late Sister Ann Busch, who served as the school's principal then, was a wonderful woman, Coach Fay says. "The students and their parents welcomed me with open arms, and it's been a pleasure to know them."

HERE ARE SOME WORDS THAT OTHERS
SHARED ABOUT **COACH FAY**

Kim Cappelletti, GIRLFRIEND

Over the last decade that I've been by Eddie's side, I've seen him from a "behind the scenes" perspective that no one else really has—from the long hours spent recording track times on the weekends, sorting athletic recognition ribbons, watching game tapes, and planning events and sports schedules, to traveling with him for basketball tournaments with his Illinois Plus boys and watching his live remote fitness and cooking classes with students during the pandemic. I've pretty much seen it all and there's one thing I've heard him say time and time again: "I do it for the kids." The passion that he has for not only working with the youth but making a positive impact on the lives of these children and who they become as they grow into adults is truly admirable. I've had the honor of reading many messages, emails, and letters from former students, players, and parents full of gratitude and love and I've witnessed firsthand how the kids respect him and look up to him, my own son included. If there's one thing I know for sure about Eddie, it is that he's touched the lives of so many, throughout his life, in various ways. Eddie is an Athletic Director, Coach, Commissioner of the Track Conference, substitute teacher, among his many roles and he excels at each of them. More importantly, Eddie is a mentor, a dependable supportive friend, a neighbor who lends a helping hand to anyone in need, a true leader in any situation that may arise, and his mother's son, without a doubt—kind, caring, compassionate, and he has a heart of gold. He would take the shirt off his own back to help someone, and he makes friends out of strangers quicker than I knew was possible. He's a man of integrity who always stands up for what is right and fair and won't accept less. I've witnessed Eddie show up for members of the community during times of loss and celebration, and I've seen them do the same for him. I am blessed to have him in my life, and not only has he been a gift to the Barrington community, but to this world.

Hayde Federighi, PARENT, FRIEND

I met Coach Fay, Saint Anne Parish School's Athletic Director, 13 years ago. Although my children were too young at the time to join school sports, my circle of friends had children involved in several sports at the school. You could tell right away by their excitement when he walks into a room that this is no ordinary athletic coach. These kids respected him, and they loved him, too. On the field, he could be a tough competitor, but off the field, he is a kind and caring man. He is not just a coach to these students. He is also a mentor and a friend. As I have come to know Coach Fay throughout the years, the one thing that always stands out to me is his unwavering dedication towards his students both in mind and body. It doesn't matter that he lives in Chicago—traffic can be horrendous and there could be rain, sleet, or snow—he is always there for his students. If he isn't coaching them, he is there to support them. Although at times he can be a little stubborn (which is why we get along so well), he has a passion for all he does, and everything he does, he does well. My children were lucky to have him as a coach and I am blessed to have him as a friend.



Dan Heffernan, PARENT, COACH

Coach Fay came to Saint Anne the second year I was a coach there and the changes he made were immediate and positive. He completely rebuilt the Saint Anne Athletic Department. His focus is always squarely on what is best for the student athletes. Ed always wanted to be sure that the student athletes and their families understood that athletics at Saint Anne's wasn't just about becoming better athletes, but that it was about becoming better individuals. Academics, being a good teammate, and sportsmanship all count. No matter the skill level, Coach Fay always found a spark to light in a child. It always impressed me to see the respect and admiration the students have for him. He has a way of being tough and firm with them, yet they all love him and would be willing to go the distance for him. It takes a special person to earn that kind of respect. Ed has coached teams as well while being the Athletic Director at Saint Anne and the students on those teams always appreciated playing for him even though he would make them work harder than any parent coached team. Knowing Ed for 18 years, it is not only children who have gained his respect. I am happy to have been a part of his parent coaching staff and later his friend. Coach Fay helps make Saint Anne and Barrington a great community.

Mary Howard, SAINT ANNE STAFF

I have known Coach Eddie Fay for the last 15 years. The day he walked in for an interview with Sister Ann, I knew Sister would hire him. There was something about him that fit exactly what she was looking for in an Athletic Director for SAPS.

Coach Fay's philosophy has always been academics first then athletics, creating Student-Athletes, using "Climbing the Ladder to Success", as his motto. As we became friends (he had to be nice to me since I am the school secretary) I learned so much about what Eddie had to offer to our students, the Athletics program, and his colleagues.

Coach Fay teaches more than the techniques of a sport to the students. He teaches life lessons to each student to push themselves in all that they do, and teaching respect to all as one of his biggest lessons. Respect for your teammates, your classmates, adults, and yourself. He insists on this from all his coaches, as well. He has a positive relationship with and influences all whom he encounters. Coach Fay models being a SAPS representative both in and out of the school building.

Last year, we needed a long-term sub and Coach Fay stepped in, showing he's a team player and willing to do anything for his students. He doesn't do anything without putting his heart and soul into it. Coach Fay brought his skills from the court into the classroom, building a community with students and colleagues.

Coach Fay's Mother was the most important person in his life, and he adored her and was a wonderful son, of whom she was very proud. She taught him to have a strong faith, a strong work ethic, and to always be kind and respectful to others.

Our Athletic Department has thrived over the years with Coach Fay as our director. We've hosted many well-run tournaments. He challenges student-athletes to push themselves to strive for more and encourages everyone, no matter how talented, to try and to do their best. Coach Fay's dedication earned him the position of president of the Northwest Catholic Conference.

I cannot thank Coach Fay enough for all he does for our school and the student-athletes. We are blessed to have him as a friend, part of our faculty/staff, and as our Athletic Director.

COACH FAY IN HIS OWN WORDS

What's on your bucket list? Well, I really don't have one, but visiting a few countries overseas would be nice. **What is your idea of perfect happiness?** I would have to say people getting along, respecting each other's differences, and uniting for the big picture. I'm a simple person and don't ask for much, but would love, if ever possible, for people to treat each other with kindness. **Is there a historical figure you admire?** Martin Luther King, because he was for all people working together for the common good. **You mentioned your Mom.** Although not a historical figure, my mother was a woman to admire because she taught me how to be a good person and not to look at a person's race, gender, or economic status, but to look at where a person's heart is. She would say 'don't judge before you know the full story'. In my eyes, all moms need to be "ADMIRER". **What trait do you admire in others?** Listen, respect, and treat people how you want to be treated. My Mother was a great example of this. She is why I am the person I am today. **Who is your favorite TV or radio personality?** Joe Soto, V103 Radio personality, because he always shares stories of inspiration, empowerment, and always has a positive message for his listeners. **What do you consider your greatest achievement in life?** I'm still on that journey. I feel once I retire (if ever) I will be able to sit back and say I made a difference in people's lives. My quest is to uplift those around me when possible. **What values**



do you hope you've imparted to students who attend Saint Anne? There are a few values I'd like the students at Saint Anne to hold close to their hearts. One would be for them to treat all people no matter race, economic status, or gender with respect and dignity. I'd also like them to stand firmly on their own two feet, speak up for what's right and wrong, while treating ALL people with respect. **Do you have a favorite song?** I have many favorite songs. Some of my favorite artists are Bob Marley (for his ability to unite people), Stevie Wonder (for his perseverance as a blind singer), as well as Santana, The Police, The Allman Brothers, Steely Dan, and The Grateful Dead. **If you could have one superpower, what would that be?** My superpower would be able to change negative into positive. Have everyone, even with differences, listen to and respect each other. **What's your personal motto?** My favorite quote is "A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove.... But the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child." This above drives me every day. Children are our future, and we need to invest in them, so we leave them in a good place. We can learn so much from kids if we just took the time to listen, be honest with them, and lead them in the right directions. "The ladder of success doesn't care who climbs it." I want all kids to be on that ladder! U