



A LEGACY UNRIVALED'S
BEST EDUCATORS
NEWSLETTER

1ST EDITION
SEPTEMBER 15TH, 2016

EDUCATOR #1: JOHN



GAGLIARDI

Coach

Coaching from 1949-2012, John Gagliardi is one of the most renowned football coaches in the nation. He spent 60 years as the head football coach for Saint John's University in Minnesota, earning the Johnnies four national championship titles and a record of 489-138-11. Not only does he have the most wins of any coach in football history, but his methodology of coaching was quite unconventional as well.

It can be said that John's coaching methods were the key to his success. John described his coaching approach as "Winning with No's." During practices, he forbid tackling, he never used a whistle, he did not use blocking sleds, he limited his practices to 90 minutes, and he made his players call him "John," not "coach." On and off the field, John never ceased to inspire and support his players—he always believed in them. Former player Thomas Kost said that "John coached with the highest ideals—the love of the game and the impeccable integrity, both of which are in short supply today." John believed that if the players believed they could do something, they WOULD do it.

In addition, John believed that a well-rounded, educated person would make the greatest player. Former player Bob Sexton of SJU '63 said that "if you had a test, you could skip practice to study. [John] knew school was more important and would tell us to keep our priorities straight in life and things should work out." He was always focusing on the bigger picture of things and wanted to see long-term success from all of his players. - Lucas J. Fyle

EDUCATOR #2: STEPHANIE

ALVAREZ



Professor

A recipient of the U.S. Professor of the Year Award in 2015, Stephanie Alvarez is nothing short of an outstanding professor. Stephanie has been a professor for ten years at University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, teaching Mexican American and Latin America Studies. As a professor, Alvarez is 110% committed to her students. She ensures that every one of her students receives the best education possible, and teaching always come first in her work as a professor.

For the past 10 years, Stephanie's students have been 90%+ Chicano American/Latin American, and Stephanie sees these students as bringing a wealth of assets into the classroom, assets which Stephanie says "largely go ignored or are too often seen as deficits by society, faculty, and too often this has been internalized even by students themselves." With that, Alvarez believes that is the educator's role to provide students with the opportunities to tap into their assets to acquire and create knowledge both inside and outside of the classroom.

To Alvarez, an effective educator is someone who cares, and that comes from the commitment from the educator. It is someone who takes extra time to help students, someone passionate about the subject matter, someone who takes students under their wing. Stephanie believes that equity across the educational system is something that America needs to improve. She declares that it is the responsibility of all faculty, and for all faculty to make this equity in classrooms, departments, committees, and even in conversations, and as a professor, Alvarez states, "It is the most critical work we have ahead of us." - Anne N. Avestruz

EDUCATOR #3: RODNEY



WEIDEMAIER

Secondary
Education Teacher



With 34 years of teaching and coaching experience, Rodney Weidemaier was a valuable member of the Stillwater School District in Oklahoma. Throughout his career, Rodney worked as a principal, assistant principal, and teacher of History, Social Studies, Civics, HPE&R and Drivers Education. Outside the classroom, he coached Football, Boys and Girls Track and Field, and Boys and Girls Basketball.

Rodney treasured teamwork and respect, always striving to carry out tactics of clear communication, intentional listening and praising his students or players when goals were accomplished. Josh Shipp, a motivational speaker, spoke highly of Rodney. Growing up, Josh was a misfit foster child who was kicked out and displaced among several foster homes before finding his place in the home of Rodney and Christine Weidemaier. After a run-in with the law, Rodney explained to Josh, “we do not see you as a problem, we see you as an opportunity.” As a foster child, Josh could have easily become another heartbreaking statistic, but the difference for Josh was one caring adult, someone who impacted and changed his life. “Every kid is one caring adult away from being a success story,” even children in the least ideal of situations, and Rodney was Josh’s caring adult.

Educators are role models and mentors, therefore they need to remember to look at kids as opportunities, similar to Rodney, who believes that someone who cares and never gives up on any student, player, or child of their own is the most effective educator. - Megan A. Posusta

EDUCATOR #4: DEBBI



AVESTRUZ

**Elementary
Education Teacher**

A Veteran teacher with 29 years of experience, Debbi Avestruz has committed herself to bringing “patience and understanding” into her 3rd grade classroom at Spring Valley Elementary School, located in the small town of Spring Valley, Wisconsin.

Avestruz drives to work effectively with her students, even during the three weeks in the summer she devotes to teaching summer school. This hard work from Debbi comes from being able to see her student’s faces light up when they realize that they have learned something new. With the constant changing in curriculum and technology in our world, Debbi believes that the most effective educators are those who can keep up with the trends, but also understand the need for the basic fundamentals in teaching.

When asked what advice she would like to share with her fellow teachers, Debbi did not reach for a detailed piece of philosophy, but she stuck to the essentials saying, “Every kid comes from a different background and no matter what, they need love and support.” This advice is something Avestruz takes seriously and is something that she remembers every day she walks into her classroom. - Karen M. Mize



Do you want to nominate an exceptional coach or educator?

Email the following information to boz@legacyunrivaled.com to give them a chance to be showcased:

Name

Position

School/Organization

Why they are exceptional

Any quotes from former/current students, players or coworkers

Legacy Unrivaled Reader is the creation of Boz Bostrom and his students. Boz spent 5 years studying one of history's best educators – John Gagliardi. Boz wrote a book about John, *A Legacy Unrivaled*, and created this newsletter as a way to showcase other outstanding educators.