

# Tom Wagner left his handprint on H-F High the past 43 years

BY MARILYN THOMAS  
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For 43 years, Tom Wagner has taken care of Homewood-Flossmoor High School as operations manager in charge of the physical plant. He retired Dec. 20.

There are those who wonder how many miles Wagner has clocked just by his constant strolling through H-F. He admitted to knowing “just about” every inch of the two buildings and the grounds on the 11.5 square miles of campus. He worked with a crew of 12, but there still are times when H-F hires out for specialty jobs, and it has hired a night cleaning crew.

Wagner has helped plan every major improvement and addition. He describes the most recent Performing Arts Center addition as “dynamite,” the North Building field house as “amazing,” and the revamping of the TV/radio suite as “second to none.”

“We just continue to look forward to needs, and the administration, from when I just started, they are forward thinking” in studying and recognizing the impact every project will have for the future of H-F. “We’ve done so much, its amazing”. I don’t know any school that has such forward effort and progression as we have on a consistent basis,” Wagner said.



Tom Wagner

Wagner has been operations manager the past 23 years and was assistant operations manager nine years before that.

In 1978, he was a stained glass artisan working on the north side of Chicago. He found himself driving from Richton Park where he had moved his young family. He

came to H-F looking for a part-time job to supplement his artisan work.

“I started part-time (at H-F), but the job flipped to a night position, so that made me available to do my full-time work, so I was doing two jobs,” he recalled. Eventually he gave up the drive and kept the H-F job.

He went to college as an electrical engineering major “but then things happened. I landed a good job and was making a whole lot of money and one thing led to another and you make those decisions to continue in that pursuit or change. I think change for me was great! And that’s basically how it worked.”



He started following around the plumbers and electricians and others to learn from them. “I asked a lot of questions,” he said.

With retirement approaching, the Homewood resident said he plans to “do nothing” for the first six months. Now he’ll have time for his many hobbies. It will be quite an adjustment from his daily H-F routine.

“I’m here 5:30 in the morning, and sometimes I’m here ‘til 8:30-9 at night. It’s not that you have to do it, but I feel more comfortable when I can stave off a problem before anybody knows about it. That’s because most people don’t even know that we have problems,” Wagner said.

As Wagner ends this chapter, he remembers the good times and all the people he’s come in contact with.

“It’s been very good. I mean it’s been really good with all the people I’ve met and worked with,” he said. “They’ve all been very supportive and allowed me to do what I do, but it’s kind of easy because my thought process was what’s best for the district.”





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