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Paula Crawford's career as H-F PE chair comes to a close

BY MARILYN THOMAS
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In her 22 years at Homewood-Flossmoor High School before retiring in June, Paula Crawford taught just about every physical education and health course on the books.

Outdoor life and sports have always been a part of her life. She grew up on a South Dakota farm, the youngest of eight children. Between helping on the farm and attending a small high school where she played every sport, Crawford was always active.

Her enthusiasm for sports continued at South Dakota State University where she played basketball, volleyball and ran track. She was an All-American in college in volleyball and track and was named one of the top 50 women in athletics at South Dakota State.

She graduated in 1986 with a bachelor's degree in physical education and a minor in science and health and taught in South Dakota for three years. She moved to Fort Wayne, Indiana, to teach middle school science, and then spent seven years as a high school PE teacher and coach for girls volleyball and track. Next, she was a teacher and volleyball coach at Merrillville High School.

She went on to earn a master's degree in educational administration from Indiana University and a second master's degree in curriculum instruction from National Lewis University.

When Crawford came to H-F in 2000, she taught and coached for two years before transitioning to chairperson for the Physical Education, Driver Education and Health Department. Crawford had responsibility for all the curriculum decisions that relate to the department; evaluations of staff within the department; budgeting; submitting paperwork to the state for driver's education.

Crawford served on numerous H-F committees because "sometimes PE is overlooked, and I never wanted that to be the case," she said. "It's always been really important for me to have other people understand how important it is to kids' bodies to be physically and mentally healthy, so they can do everything and anything else they want to do in life."



Paula Crawford

H-F requires a standard gym class for freshmen and sophomores, but upper classmen get to choose from a wide variety of PE options, such as archery, bowling, ice skating, strength and performance, swimming, yoga, fishing,

aerobics, kick boxing, meditation and a host of other courses.

Crawford structured the curriculum that way because she believed a varied curriculum was a way to keep students active. "If it's something they'll love, they're going to participate," and she found that some of the offerings "really, really helped a lot of the kids who really didn't want to get in there and be the sporty people."

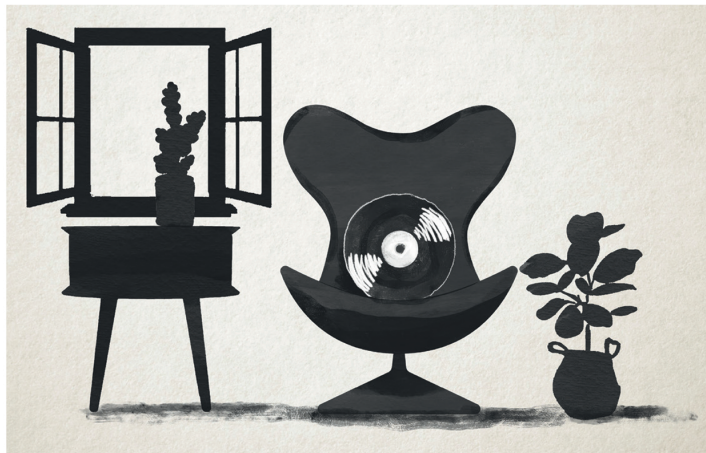
During her time at H-F, District 233 built the fieldhouse, the lacrosse field and a new track. She recalled touring facilities with other staff and talking through what could be possible for H-F. She said one thing she pushed for was an eight-lane outdoor track. Having that track gave H-F opportunities to host regional events.

Crawford said, "Those events really put H-F on the map."

Crawford and her family lived in the district. Her two children and three stepchildren all went through H-F and benefited not just from the academics but all the extra-curriculars.

"I could not have asked for a better place to finish my career. H-F is just the most outstanding community and place. ... When looking for places I knew this was it. I knew coming over from Indiana this is where I wanted to end up and where I wanted to teach," she said.

Crawford and her husband will be retiring to South Dakota where most of her siblings live. She still has her certification as an aerobics and fitness instructor and expects she'll be teaching water aerobics soon, in addition to improving her golf game.



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