

excited

FOR EDUCATION

Alumni share how Defiance College helped shape their futures in education

KEN JONES '69

A passion for teaching



Trish and Ken Jones

Ken Jones '69 is a well-known figure in education in northwest Ohio. He has been a math teacher, guidance counselor, basketball coach, principal, and for the majority of his professional career, district superintendent. He retired from the Ayersville School District in 1999 and went to work for General Motors for three years. However, "I got a little itchy to get back into the education business," he relates, and in 2002 he accepted the position of superintendent at Evergreen Local Schools.

"Teaching has always been a passion of mine," Ken explains. "As I have done the different jobs in education, I've tried to maintain the teacher focus. I've always enjoyed that part of the process of education."

However, the challenges of a superintendent's position are always about finances, he admits. "I've been a superintendent for 26 years, and in those 26 years, I've had 29 tax issues on the ballot between the two districts. This is probably the most important job of a superintendent. What's unfortunate about it is the time that it takes away from the role as an educational leader."

Ken has announced his retirement at the end of the current school year. While his plans include spending more time in a warmer climate, he wants to get into educational consulting, helping educators and administrators in their work.

Thinking over his years in education, Ken relates, "The joy of this position is the ability to have an impact on students and their future. Although at times the focus is different than you might want, at the end of the day, I wouldn't have it any other way."

Originally from Continental, Ken was recruited to play basketball for DC by Marv Hohenberger and had the chance to help with coaching duties with freshmen his senior year, which he calls a fabulous experience. Ken is married to his high school sweetheart, Trish, who attended DC for her two-year teacher's license. They live in Wauseon and have three children and four grandchildren.

DON AMMONS '71

Mind-expanding education



Don Ammons

Dr. Don Ammons '71 contends that while he learned how to teach at Defiance College, he also learned how to learn. "Attending DC taught me how to be a learner, and taught me how to educate myself."

After leaving DC, Don worked in mental health while pursuing his master's and Ph.D., and then followed a career path that led him first to teach counseling and human services, then to serve as dean of arts and sciences at Trident Technical College, and to his current position

as vice president for academic affairs at Gaston College in Dallas, NC, where he has been for eight years. "Now I am having to learn things in terms of engineering technologies, health sciences, nursing, all those areas, as well as the general education core, and business information technologies. You have to become an expert in those fields to be able to promote and evaluate all those programs."

"When the economy gets bad, we're workforce development," Don said, relating his appreciation for community colleges. "Our average student age is 27, maybe higher. The two-year college is part of the economic development machine – you have to be responsive to the community, and be able to change on a dime. It's been a real challenge."

Thinking back to his time at DC, Don relates, "When people talk about a liberal arts education, where you prepare the whole person to think and problem solve in many unique areas – that's the kind of preparation I needed to supervise disciplines in which I've had no training at all. It's very mind-expanding."

He and his wife, Jackie, reside in Gastonia, NC.

*Profiles written by
Michele Tinker, Director of Annual Giving*

KEITH BELL '78

Directing academic programming



Keith Bell

Having previously spent 29 years in education, last year Keith Bell '78 became the director of secondary academic affairs for Westerville City Schools. In this position, he is responsible for the supervision and direction of all academic programming, development of new academic programming, and the supervision of principals and assistant principals of three high schools and four middle schools in this suburb of Columbus, Ohio. Keith relates his new job to using a different lens, looking at decisions and directions from a district perspective. Plus, he adds, he now has no school bells driving his day.

Looking back at his time at college, Keith reflects, "It was Defiance that allowed me to test my theories and develop practical experiences that still benefit me today." While his

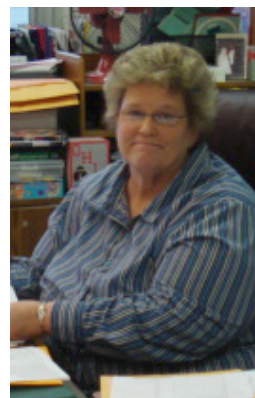
parents made him understand how important it was to be able to work with all kinds of people, he was able to cultivate this ability at Defiance College, he explains.

"Had I not listened to Garnett Smith, my business teacher and advisor, I would not be in the position I am today. She took the extra time to not only assist me with a graduate assistantship, but also to see my true calling. I listened!"

Keith and his wife, Toni, live in the Columbus area and have two children, Keith Jr. and Joshua. He has served on the Defiance College Board of Trustees since 2004.

RAE GAMBLER '81

Getting students to learn



Rae Gambler

"Science is a way to solve the problems of the world!" Spoken like the true science teacher Rae Gambler '81 has been for the past 28 years. She has been teaching sixth grade science at Defiance Middle School for the last 14 years, and her goal for her

students is simple: getting them to learn.

Asked about her penchant for science, Rae relates that she has always wanted to blow things up and experiment. Her favorite part of the year is Experiment Week, where her classes make slime, silly putty, and mystery goop. She feels that most of the students like science, which makes the job easier. They might ask, "Why do we have to learn this?" about math or social studies, but not science.

"No two days are the same," Rae explains. She likes the hands-on part of science, where students who may not be book smart are learning because they're doing. She enjoys seeing their reaction to what they do in class, especially the messy projects.

Rae received both her undergraduate and master's degrees from Defiance College and has also taught some graduate level classes at the college, sharing what she's learned with other teachers. Rae has the distinction of being in the Defiance Academic Hall of Fame, and was recently awarded the Master Teacher national certification, which recognizes excellence inside and outside the classroom through consistent leadership, focused collaboration and distinguished teaching and continued professional growth. Rae has been involved with the Defiance High School quiz bowl team for 20 years, and works with the sixth grade quiz team as well. She and her husband, Bob, live in Bryan, Ohio.

BRAD PLONKA '02

Growing a charter school



Brad Plonka

A native of the Detroit area, Brad Plonka '02 is now settled happily in California. When he first relocated, Brad taught world history in a Los Angeles middle school and then joined the new Magnolia Science Academy in Venice. Here he is glad to be out of the traditional classroom, teaching physical education and also serving as discipline coordinator, or dean. In this capacity, he works with setting policies through the academy, making sure the students are following the handbook, and communicating with parents and staff.

Magnolia Science Academy is a tuition-free public charter school, which provides an emphasis on mathematics, science and technology. Currently, the academy teaches children in grades six through eight, but will eventually be a 6-12 school. "We are a first-year program, growing in size each year as a grade level is added," Brad explains, adding that the

expectation is that next year's student body will be 250, compared to 125 this year. "We currently have a waiting list for the academy," he adds.

Brad also coaches basketball. About his team, he says, "We're growing. We weren't as good as the Yellow Jackets were this past year." He would like to coach football someday. "Without playing football at DC for four years, without the guidance from the coaches, without learning about teamwork, I wouldn't be where I am today."

His wife, Lisa, is a native of Southern California and a veterinarian. Lisa and Brad live in Encino with their new daughter, Lily.

STEVE BRANCHEAU '07

Making sense of mathematics



Steve Brancheau

Steve Brancheau '07 is in his second year at St. John's Jesuit High School and Academy in Toledo where he teaches honors algebra II, trigonometry, functional analysis, and probability and statistics to sophomores and seniors. He is also an assistant coach to St.

John's acclaimed football team.

"Math has just always made sense to me. I love teaching, and I always knew I wanted to coach," Steve says. Math is used in every facet of life, he explains to his students, from the obvious ones, such as going to the store, to more abstract uses, such as applying logic if you're an attorney. He brings a lot of energy to the classroom, and works to get to know his students individually, so he can relate the subject to them on a personal level and keep them interested. As an example of making math applicable to the students' lives, a recent class project for his probability and statistics class involved charting everyone's cellphone usage, and using this information to help define, use, and implement important terms such as mean, median, outlier, variance, and standard deviation.

A favorite exercise of Steve's is to ask students to write down three things they've learned in his class, something they liked about the class, as well as something they didn't like.

Steve feels privileged to be part of the Titans' football program. Aside from his love of the game, he appreciates how coaching helps him get to know students on a more personal level outside the classroom setting.

Steve enjoyed his years at Defiance College. Reminiscing, he said, "I have a lot of fond memories from DC and the people that I have met there. I feel that DC has helped mold me into the teacher, coach, and person that I am today."

TIFFANY ALLOMONG ZIPFEL '01

Teaching with a Golden Rule



Tiffany Allomong Zipfel

Tiffany Allomong Zipfel '01 believes many of life's lessons are taught in Phys. Ed. Every incident in the gym can be a learning experience, according to this physical education teacher at Defiance Junior High School. "Sportsmanship is about how you treat others. The Golden Rule is my biggest thing," she explains. Respect and self-respect are topics that frequently come up for discussion, especially during what her eighth graders call Zipfel's Ponderisms, Friday chat sessions with her classes. Tiffany believes that as a physical education teacher, she meets the students on a different level than a classroom teacher or even guidance counselor might, and this establishes a unique rapport. She feels that compassion is something she learned from

her professors at DC and what she brings to her work with the students. And it's something her students gave back to her when she was struggling with her mother's illness and recent death.

Starting college at Indiana-Purdue University's Fort Wayne campus, she transferred to DC after her first year. "I came from a small town, and it meant a lot to come to Defiance College and have that one-on-one relationship with faculty - that was a big plus for me. No one knew who I was at IPFW." Tiffany says she often thinks, "What would Professor (Duane) Hocking say to me if I did that? Or, what would Professor Hocking expect of me?"

Tiffany is married to Fritz Zipfel, another DC alumnus of the class of 1998 who also works for the Defiance City Schools. They have a three-year-old son, Brezlen, and they live in Defiance.

TIM RETTIG '96

Changing the way teachers work



Tim Rettig and family

"We shot for the stars, but we hit the moon." Bryan High School assistant principal and DC alumnus Tim Rettig '96 said of a recent school district-wide technology initiative. Technology director at the time, Tim was involved in an effort to put a laptop in the hands of every student. While this wasn't realized, Tim reports that Bryan now has a highly developed technology network, and each teacher has his or her own laptop. Because

of this, the faculty has the same access at home or on trips as they do sitting at their desk in school. Tim said he's repeatedly heard the comment, "You've changed the way I work," especially from those teachers with a passion for what they do.

Recalling faculty that had a special impact on his time at DC, Tim remembers Dr. Jon Daniels, as one of the greatest teachers he's experienced, as well as Dr. Patricia Olsen, Professor Jim Bray, and Dr. Don Knueve. Tim played football for four years at DC and participated in the Chamber Singers as well, where he met his wife, Tammie Kappen Rettig '98. Tammie, a science and education major, is currently devoting her time to being home with their two young daughters, Maggie and Emma. The Rettigs reside in Bryan.

KELLY HOPSON '08

Non-traditional education success



Kelly Hopson

Kelly admits to being nervous about going back to college. Married and with one child, she had been providing daycare in her home, and her enjoyment in working with the children daily guided her decision to pursue a degree in early childhood education at Defiance College.

Being a non-traditional student wasn't easy, and this was compounded by the arrival of her second son in the middle of her studies. Kelly remembers going to education professor Fred Coulter saying, "I don't know if I can do this!" However, thanks to the flexibility of the professors and the support of DC's Center for Adult and Graduate Programs, she graduated with her B.S. in Education last May. In fact, she was selected to be a spokesperson for the adult program in a recent marketing campaign.

Now teaching kindergarten at Noble Elementary School in Defiance, Kelly says, "This is my dream! This is what I always wanted to do." She thinks the new all-day, every-day kindergarten format at Noble gives the teacher time to fit everything in, while leaving room for hands-on activities and fun. It gives the children a more consistent routine, Kelly states. "I feel they're achieving more."

Kelly credits her husband, Aaron, for his support and his willingness to take on extra work to help her reach her goal. She and Aaron, and sons, Alex and Konnor, live in Defiance.

"When people talk about a liberal arts education, where you prepare the whole person to think and problem-solve in many unique areas, that's the kind of preparation I needed to supervise disciplines in which I've had no training at all. It's very mind-expanding."

-- Dr. Don Ammons '71,
Teacher education alum

HONORARY DOCTORATE

Defiance College awards Dr. Robert Head '76 at the 2009 commencement ceremony

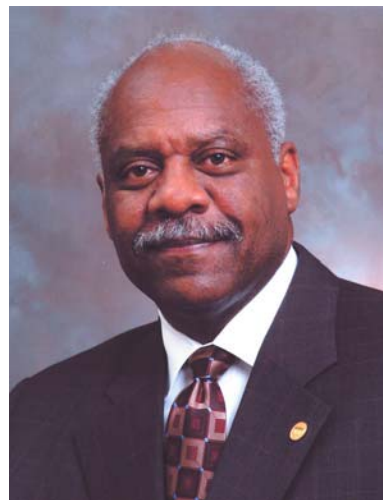
Dr. Robert L. Head '76 was recently named the 17th president of Rockford College in Illinois and was the 2009 Defiance College commencement speaker. Dr. Head's outstanding commitment to civic engagement and to the field of education was recognized by DC with the awarding of an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters during the ceremony.

Dr. Head has an impressive background which includes many years of experience in the banking industry. He served as vice-president, trust services at Toledo Trust Co., in Ohio, and vice-president, trust services at Northern Trust Co. in Chicago during the '80s and '90s.

The change to higher education came after a stint on the board of trustees at Defiance College. Dr. Head's first academic appointment was at Benedictine University, Lisle, Ill., where he was an associate

professor of business and vice-president of administration. Then, in 2001, he accepted the presidency at Urbana University in Ohio, a school similar to Rockford College with approximately 1,500 students.

At Urbana, Dr. Head is credited with increasing enrollment by 20 percent and doubling the residential population, attracting more international students to campus, expanding academic programs, creating partnerships with business and industry, and spearheading a successful \$6 million capital campaign for a new



Dr. Robert L. Head

student center, educational endowment, athletic stadium, and other campus improvements.

Dr. Head has a bachelor's degree in management from Defiance College; a master's in business administration from the University of Toledo; a master's in management and organizational behavior from Benedictine; and his doctorate in organization development, also from Benedictine. He also attended the Institute for Educational

Management at Harvard University.

Dr. Head and his wife, Sheryl, are active in the community of Rockford and have three grown children. ♦