The first word that should be used to describe Wake County Athletics Director Bobby Guthrie is service. His service to the student-athletes in Wake County and across North Carolina has been second to none.

On Tuesday he announced that he will be retiring from his position in February, a career that saw him give over 35 years to the education and advancement of young people.

His athletic career began at Southern Alamance High School and then led him to Chapel Hill where he was a star on the diamond for the Tar Heels baseball team. In 1974 he led UNC in hits, runs, RBI's and home runs, but it was his selfless approach and emphasis of a team concept that led him to education and coaching.

Guthrie, who has been in his current role for over 17 years, started his career in Laurinburg as a teacher and baseball coach at Scotland High School in Laurinburg. There he began to excel in the coaching arena and led the Fighting Scots to the 1977 4A Baseball State Championship.

After returning to UNC to earn his master's degree, he became a graduate assistant baseball coach for the Tar Heels before accepting the baseball coaching position at UNC-Wilmington where he coached the Seahawks for 14 years. He was the head coach from 1984-91.

During his time at UNC-Wilmington, Guthrie crossed paths with a young Michael Jordan and even tried recruiting him to play both basketball and baseball for the Seahawks.

After his coaching career, he returned to the classroom and taught at Trask Middle School in Wilmington, Laney High School, and Apex Middle School before taking on his current role.

It was the variety of positions that he held that made him feel he was suitable for the role as county athletic director, and what helped him to excel in his profession.

"I've had many different experiences at the middle school, high school, and college level, which I thought gave me some background in the different aspects of the job." Guthrie said. "It helps to have been a recruiter at the college level, to know the NCAA eligibility center and timelines."

However coaching education is the area in which Guthrie excelled in and made significant gains not only in North Carolina, but for coaches across the country. Ahead of his time, he was leading the way in educating coaches at both the middle school and the high school levels.

"I was very much involved in coaching education," he adds. "I was involved in it even before the National Federation of High Schools started their programs."

"One thing I noticed when I was at middle schools was that they didn't get a lot of governance." He stated. "I tried to push sportsmanship at an early age."

A champion for all sports, he was also known for the advancement of cheerleading, swimming, and athletic training.

Educating the cheerleading coaches became a priority. "What other sport puts kids high on the tops of shoulders and does flips?" He asked. It became a concern of his to improve not only the sport, but the wellbeing of the athletes.

Continuing on his mission of educating coaches and protecting athletes, he led the cause to improve athletic training across the county.

"We've got licensed athletic trainers at all of our school." He adds. "I have really worked with our athletic trainers over the years in making sure they had what they needed to do the jobs they needed to do, because they're vital to our high school athletes."

Service– A reoccurring theme

With the encouragement of the North Carolina Athletic Directors Association Executive Director Jerry McGee, Guthrie led the way in training and advancement for athletic directors across the state and beyond.

He served on many committees and attended national conferences all due to the guidance of McGee.

He also credits former North Carolina High School Athletic Association Executive Director Charlie Adams and current commissioner Davis Whitefield for their guidance and for allowing him to serve on the Board of Directors for the NCHSAA.

“It was really fun for me to do that job,” He adds. “One of the more interesting committees that I’ve served on was the one for non-parochial and charter schools. I think we’ve come up with some great ideas and suggestions that can help with those schools in the future.”

But of all the things that Guthrie will miss when he finally hangs it up is the interaction with the kids and watching the athletes of Wake County compete.

“I’ve gone to at least two or three athletic events every week for the past 17 years so I’ve seen a lot of kids play,” he said. “And I’ve enjoyed them all.”

He has received many awards over the years but none more prestigious than when he was selected as the 2010 Coach Educator of the Year by the National Federation of State High Schools.

His last day on the job is expected to be February 28th.

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