

https://newsadvance.com/community/new_era_progress/sports/lancer-baseball-program-pays-homage-to-coach-jim-procopio/article_b56b99b4-b6ea-11ed-81ce-0b687a7f0ef4.html

Lancer baseball program pays homage to Coach Jim Procopio

Justin Faulconer

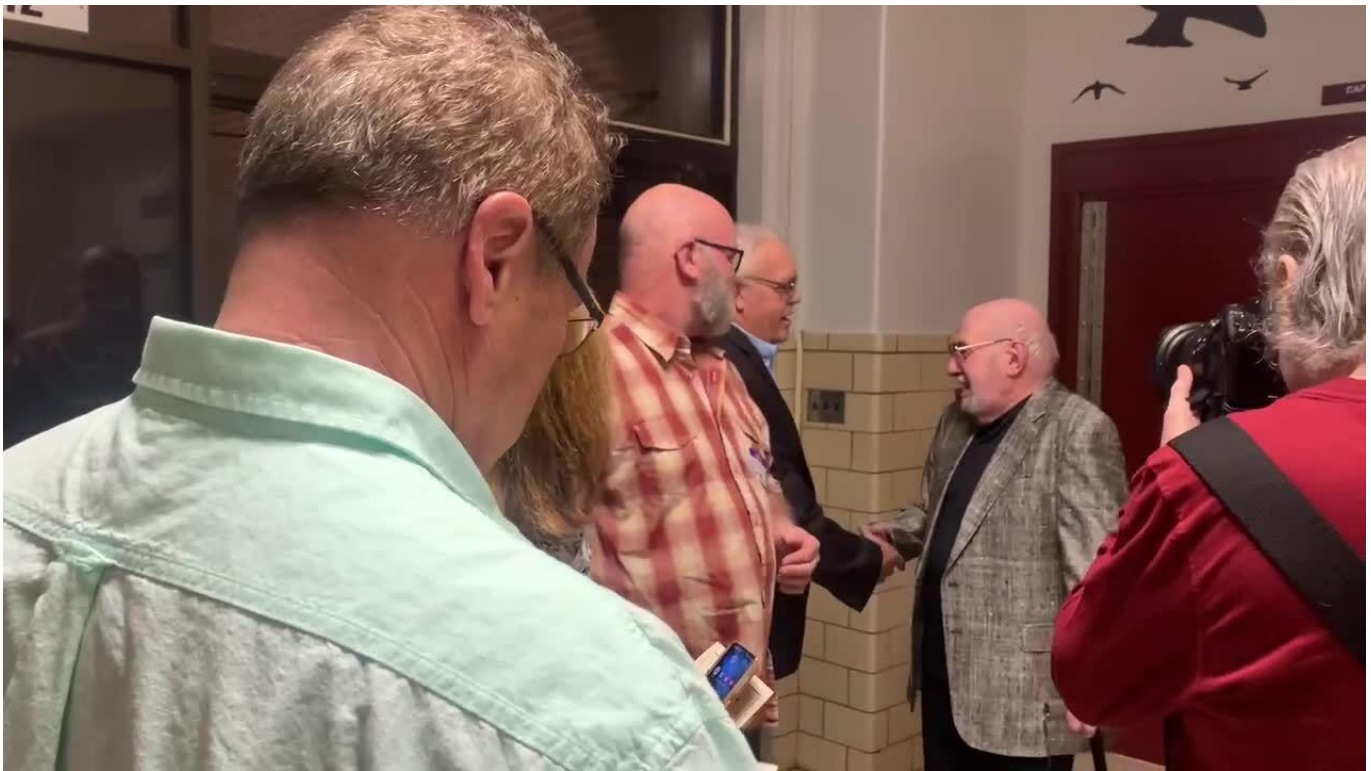
Mar 1, 2023



Former Lancer baseball coach and three-time state champion Jim Procopio, right, shares a laugh and embrace with Feb. 23 celebration event at Amherst County High School.

Photo by Lee Luther Jr., for the New Era-Progress

Justin Faulconer



For more than an hour Feb. 23 during “Jim Procopio Recognition Night,” memories filled the old Amherst County High School gym with the same thrill of a home run off the bat or a pivotal play in the field.

The Procopio era that defined Lancer baseball was back in full force for a night of fellowship and family.

The legendary former Amherst baseball coach who led the Lancers to three state championships and numerous district titles in baseball and football was the focus of stories, heartfelt speeches and laughter that shined a spotlight on his memorable career.

Procopio coached the baseball team from 1968 to 1985 and over the years was an extremely positive influence on the student-athletes, some of whom went on to play and coach in the scholastic, collegiate, professional and international levels, according to John Apperson, the Lancer team’s current coach.

People are also reading...

- 1 Your right to know: Latest property transfers and building permits**

2 Bedford ladder truck purchase presents sticker shock for town council

3 Snow ahead Monday in Virginia: Here's how much to expect

4 From marching band to big band to a new solo career, local saxophonist makes it big in his hometown

Many of those former players in attendance stood to applaud as Procopio entered the gym jubilantly.

Frank H. Fulton, Jr., who coached along Procopio in Amherst, served as master of ceremonies.

“I talked to a lot of people before we did this,” Fulton said. “I said I cannot do this unless I start crying. It’s going to happen. They said, ‘Coach, you just go ahead and do it because we’re going to cry anyway.’”

Fulton said former players and coaches who have a deep love for the game and played at various levels have been directly influenced by Procopio.

“They’re all right here because of Coach Procopio,” said Fulton, who was inspired to develop a book in honor of his friend and mentor.

Procopio referred to himself as “The Italian Stallion,” a popular phrase from the iconic Academy Award-winning movie ‘Rocky,’ and was the Lancers baseball team’s Italian general who was all the team needed and challenged them in various ways, Fulton said.

Fulton said he never saw baseball practice run like Procopio ran it, which was like football practice.

Buddy Bailey, an Amherst County High School graduate who played under Procopio and currently is manager of the Myrtle Beach Pelicans, said his beloved high school coach had nicknames for the players and was one of the three pillars of influence on his baseball career of more than 40 years.

“There’s a lot of us that owe so much to you, it’s incredible,” Bailey said to Procopio.

“I think of my success and what I’ve been able to do...I owe so much to you.”

Bailey, who said Procopio was funny and disciplined as a coach and his personality and energy level was amazing. He added he can’t say enough words about how important Procopio has been.

“I think you put Central Virginia baseball on the map. You put us on a level that all these other coaches are fighting now to achieve,” Bailey said.

DeWayne Kitts, who pitched for the Lancers during a championship season under Procopio in the 1970s, also spoke fondly of his former coach’s influence and winning ways.

“You pushed me to be the best,” Kitts said, sharing a warm embrace with Procopio.

Fulton encouraged current Lancer baseball players to take note of Procopio’s legacy that reverberates after decades.

“It doesn’t matter where we are in the world, we can pick up the phone and call. We call him and he tells us stories and he gives us information and he’s our daddy...

We’re brothers and it’s just a wonderful thing,” Fulton said, telling current players:

“This is one of the greatest things you will ever do is place baseball in this place right here and with this family that circles you.”

Procopio spoke of the events that led him to Amherst more than 50 years ago and how he and his family had more than 20 addresses in the span of seven years as part of his baseball career. From big cities to rural Amherst, Procopio’s baseball journey that included a long storied tenure as a Lancer leader “was meant to be,” he said.

“There was no place around that had a better feeder system and more kids,” Procopio said.

Procopio fondly recalled the strong community bond for the Lancer program and the filled the bleachers were fans and spectators. He added “once a Lancer always a Lancer.”

Bill Dawson, the Lancers’ current assistant coach, said his sophomore season playing ball at the high school in 1985 was Procopio’s final season. Dawson said he learned more in that season under Procopio than any in his lifetime.

“If you paid attention and listened to the man, you learned everything you need to know about this game,” Dawson said. “And he’s meant so much to baseball in this area, this community and Central Virginia.”

By Justin Faulconer

https://newsadvance.com/community/new_era_progress/news/sister-act-three-years-coming-for-amherst-high-school-drama-program/article_763d4a40-c75b-11ed-8400-43a2e230129a.html

'Sister Act' three years coming for Amherst high school drama program

Justin Faulconer

Mar 22, 2023



Amherst County High School's drama program rehearses the spring musical "Sister Act" on March 16.

Paige Dingler, The News & Advance

Justin Faulconer



Nuns, gangsters, priests, cops and plenty of music are lined up for Amherst County High School's spring musical, 'Sister Act,' from March 30 to April 1.

The musical has a special meaning for seniors in the drama program putting on the musical, as it was the spring 2020 play that got canceled because of COVID-19. Three years later, those students who were freshmen that year and Instructor Patricia Emmert agreed it should come to life for the seniors' last major production before graduation.

When students suggested it to Emmert, she said 'Why not?'

"It's a beautiful show," Emmert said. "It's a beautiful work. And they're doing justice to it."

With many roles for the cast to immerse themselves in, Emmert said the show particularly shines a spotlight on the ladies and their talents.

People are also reading...

- 1 **Newest Bedford Ave. business, Palmera House, set to open this fall**

- 2 **Details of Amherst woman's 'brutal' homicide come out at preliminary hearing**
 - 3 **Tornado Watch until 9 p.m. - Update from Meteorologist Sean Sublette**
 - 4 **Vinton man convicted of election fraud, turning false signatures for Bedford supervisor seat**
-

“It highlights a ton of women and not a lot of musicals do that,” Emmert said.

“There’s a lot of strength in the female voice in this show.”

Senior Makayla Davis, who plays Deloris Van Cartier, the lead character, said the play moves quickly and the cast has bonded in the richness of the roles, music, props and costumes.

“It just has so many characters, so much interaction and I think everyone is really excited for our show nights,” Davis said. “It’s such a fun play, I think, for one — the music makes it so much fun. There’s so many songs: it’s very 70s and there’s good soul music. It’s kind of something for everyone so I think that’s probably the best part about it.”

Senior Michael Tock, who plays Lt. Eddie Souther, describes the play as the story of an egotistical, flashy night club dancer who thinks she’s queen of the world but finds her life turned upside down after witnessing a murder. On the run in witness protection, her world also is rocked when she enters a nunnery and the humbling begins as the story’s villain tries to track her down.

“It’s a really fun play because of how diverse it is,” Tock said of the range of characters. “I love playing Eddie Souther so much. I relate to him on a personal level a lot because he is a major dork, as I am, but he gains his confidence in the second act.”

Tock said a solo song showcases how Eddie can be the guy his love interest wants him to be and rising above the “Sweaty Eddie” moniker he is known by.

“It’s a song that I’ve really related to for years and it’s so awesome I now get to be a part of it,” Tock said.

The suit-clad Bronson Dawson, a senior channeling his inner mobster for the role of Curtis Jackson, the crime boss looking to silence Deloris, said he likes the story the play is telling of a girl who realizes she doesn’t need fame and fortune to be happy.

Dawson relishes the opportunity to play the bad guy.

“I always wanted to play a villain actually,” Dawson said.

The leading seniors agree it’s fitting to pick up a play that eluded them during the first days of the pandemic that has been in the backdrop of the majority of their high school years.

“I’m really excited to put this show on for the audience,” Dawson said.

Senior Caroline Cockerham, who plays Mother Superior, the head nun often at odds with Deloris, said she likes embracing a setting that’s different.

“It’s in such an unusual place,” Cockerham said. “It’s really fun to get into this character you normally wouldn’t be in.”

She describes Mother Superior as very strict and pious, who has a dry sense of humor that routinely lands during the dialogue.

“It’s been an absolutely wonderful experience,” Cockerham said of her years of Amherst County High School theater she is sad to be leaving. “I couldn’t have asked for a better director, I could haven’t asked for better friends to help me along the way.”

Sister Act is at 7 p.m. all three nights with the house opening at 6:30 p.m. in the high school’s auditorium, 139 Lancer Lane in Amherst. Emmert said because of some themes and a few words in the script children under age 8 are not advised to attend.

For ticket information and prices visit www.amhersttheatre.com

By Justin Faulconer

'Epitome of a public servant': Longtime Amherst County purchasing agent David Proffitt retires

Justin Faulconer

Jul 4, 2023



David Proffitt, deputy county administrator, in Amherst on Thursday, June 15.

Paige Dingler, New Era-Progress

Justin Faulconer

In the countless Amherst County Board of Supervisors meetings and other local government functions at the county administration offices over the past three decades, no face has been more familiar than David Proffitt.

The longtime purchasing agent for the county retired at the end of June, culminating a 36-year career where he also took the role of deputy county administrator. During his tenure he served as interim county administrator on four occasions and is known by co-workers as the unofficial county historian with offices in three locations: the courthouse on Taylor Street, the second floor of the fire department in Amherst and the current county administration building.

Proffitt, a native of the Arrington area in Nelson County, started in February 1987 and during a recent interview recalled the wing of the county building where his office is located being built in 1992. He has photos of the previous school building that was torn down before the current headquarters for county government and Amherst County Public Schools was built, a process he was directly involved in as director of purchasing.

People are also reading...

- 1 One killed in Campbell County blaze**
- 2 Newest Bedford Ave. business, Palmera House, set to open this fall**
- 3 Snow ahead Monday in Virginia: Here's how much to expect**
- 4 Police: Two-vehicle wreck in Amherst hospitalizes three people**

“Amherst County is a great place to work,” Proffitt said. “And I really felt comfortable this was the place I’m meant to be. Not only did I find the job fulfilling, but this area has become a home and I like living here.”

A 1973 graduate of Nelson County High School, Proffitt has lived in Amherst County 43 years and worked eight years as a purchasing agent for the former Craddock-Terry Shoe Company in downtown Lynchburg before starting with the county.

“The company was at one time the largest employer in Lynchburg,” Proffitt said. “I was in procurement and I liked what I was doing.”

The advertisement for Amherst County's procurement position, a relatively new one, caught his eye. Along with the county government, the county schools division and Amherst County Service Authority were included, he said. The county at the time was looking for a person to develop a centralized purchasing function to create efficiencies and cost savings and he stepped in that role, Proffitt said.

In the purchasing agent role, he is responsible for procuring goods and services, and making sure they are within the framework of Virginia's procurement laws, he said.

"Everything from pencils for first-graders to construction of buildings," Proffitt said of the types of goods and services he handled during his tenure.

He recalled starting his job in the county courthouse and the county, at the time, not having departments of public safety or solid waste, among others.

"We were a smaller operation," Proffitt said.

He recalled much of the current county administration building built in 1988 to house Amherst County Public Schools' administration and the county's social services department. Proffitt, 68, said he worked for eight county administrators.

"I found the place I believe I was intended to be," Proffitt said. "I was blessed with the job. I felt almost every day I tried to serve people directly or indirectly. It was a sense of fulfilment and I had some purpose to what I was doing."

Transitioning from the private sector to local government was a major change, he recalled.

"It was a huge eye-opening experience in the difference ... particularly in the area of procurement and how finances work because I was coming from a profit-driven atmosphere to one that wasn't," Proffitt said.

One of the largest areas of growth in the county has been the area of public safety, he said.

“We are certainly providing more services than we did in various areas — as I see it, the area of public safety, solid waste and recreation,” Proffitt said.

He also worked hard to make sure taxpayer money was spent efficiently, he said.

“Most of the boards I worked with appear to be intentionally prudent in the use of taxpayer funds and it’s been a mission that we have written in procurement and our policies that our goal to ... procure the greatest value possible for the tax dollars spent,” Proffitt said. “That doesn’t mean always you get the cheapest thing — you get the value for what you need for the money you spend.”

Proffitt said he has a multitude of personal special projects he plans to tackle in his retirement.

“David is known throughout the region for his expertise in procurement procedures and was often consulted by other localities working to establish their purchasing policies,” a news release from the county recognizing his years of service said. “His co-workers know him for his professionalism, ethics, integrity, and problem-solving.

David oversaw many projects during his tenure, including; the E911 system, the regional radio system, multiple reassessments, and many county facility improvements on buildings, parks, and trails. His favorite projects to work on were building enhancements, and many county facilities are better today because of David’s experience.”

David Pugh, a member of the Amherst County Board of Supervisors, said Proffitt has been a tremendous asset for the county.

“He has a wealth of knowledge. Any question you ask about county history, he knows it,” Pugh said. “He’s a salt-of-the-earth type of guy — he will do anything for you. You couldn’t meet a better person. We couldn’t have asked for a better employee than David Proffitt.”

Pugh said he appreciates Proffitt's work having a positive effect on the county's bottom line.

"He's always made every dollar count and he understands that because he grew up working hard. He's done a great job," Pugh said. "He's always made sure all the tax dollars are spent wisely. Just having his demeanor, his calmness, throughout the years has been good for the county."

County Administrator Jeremy Bryant, who has worked with Proffitt for the past 17 years, said he is greatly missed.

"David Proffitt has been an exceptional asset to Amherst County," Bryant said. "David's institutional knowledge has been helpful to lead a very successful organization. David is kind, friendly and is a joy to work with."

Amherst County Supervisor Claudia Tucker, who was worked with Proffitt longer than any current member of the board of supervisors, also said the county is much better off because of his service.

"David is the epitome of a public servant," Tucker said. "The man is absolutely unflappable and that trait is what has made him so very valuable over the years. He has the gift of common sense and a memory that is amazing. His institutional knowledge will be sorely missed — lucky for us, he has willingly shared that knowledge over the years and because of that we will continue to move forward efficiently and effectively."

Whether people were on the cleaning crew, a CEO of a company or a citizen needing help, Proffitt could always be counted on to treat everyone with respect, Tucker said.

"Current employees, former employees and anyone who has had the privilege to work with him has a 'David Proffitt story,'" Tucker said. "I'm very happy to have had that privilege not only as a colleague but as a friend."

Pugh said for all the changes the county leadership has gone through in recent decades, Proffitt has been a constant.

“That kind of experience you just don’t replace,” Pugh said.

Justin Faulconer, (434) 473-2607

jfaulconer@newsadvance.com

By Justin Faulconer
