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Reynolds looks back on a life in education

ANDREW CRITCHELOW The News-Enterprise
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Michelle Reynolds stands with members of North Middle School's administrative team. From left, school counselor Jennifer Armes, Assistant Principal David Allen, Reynolds and Principal Jeff Lowman.

Michelle Reynolds of Elizabethtown retired last year after three decades in education. For Reynolds, teaching is a true family endeavor.

Reynolds' father, Bill, was a math teacher, vice principal and principal for the former East Hardin High School in Glendale and served as director of pupil personnel for Hardin County Schools. Reynolds' mother, Joan, worked as an instructional assistant and secretary for Hardin County Schools.

"My parents have definitely been my biggest inspiration," Reynolds said.

In addition, Reynolds' older brother, Billy, served as a math teacher at Bluegrass Middle School in Elizabethtown and East Hardin Middle School in Glendale, while her younger brother, Ryan, currently serves as a math teacher at East Hardin Middle. Her sisters-in-law also work in education.

Throughout her career, Reynolds primarily worked at North Middle School in Radcliff. Starting with the school when it was known as Radcliff Middle School, Reynolds served as a math teacher, girls' basketball coach and guidance counselor throughout her 25-year tenure.

Originally from Glendale, Reynolds graduated from East Hardin High School and went on to earn a middle school teaching degree from Western Kentucky University in 1991. She also earned her master's degree and Rank 1 from WKU.

"I was blessed with so many wonderful teachers, and I wanted to follow in their footsteps," Reynolds said.

Immediately after graduating from WKU, Reynolds went on to teach at Olsen Middle School in Dania Beach, Florida, for two years. In addition to her work at North Middle, Reynolds also has worked at Bluegrass Middle and Old Kentucky Home Middle School in Bardstown.

At North Middle, Reynolds started out as a math teacher for sixth through eighth grade, serving in this capacity for 15 years before going to serve as a guidance counselor until her retirement in 2020. She also served as a girls' basketball coach for North Middle and for North Hardin High School.

"The students and staff made me want to stay there so long," she said.

Jennifer Armes, who worked in the guidance office at North Middle with Reynolds for about 10 years, said Reynolds is "energetic, genuine and dedicated."

"Her passion for students wasn't just a job, it was a calling," Armes said. "She had the ability to connect with every student, every parent and staff member she has ever worked with."

Reynolds said her approach to teaching and counseling always was based on building relationships with students and allowing them to use their unique learning styles in the classroom.

"I tried to be positive and encouraging on a daily basis," she said.

Last October, Reynolds stepped out of retirement to serve as an interim guidance counselor at G. C. Burkhead Elementary School in Elizabethtown to assist with a vacancy in the role. Reynolds continued to serve as interim guidance counselor until the end of the 2020-21 school year.

"I enjoyed being at the elementary level, which was new for me," Reynolds said.

Looking back on her career, Reynolds said her greatest rewards have been the relationships she built with students, staff and parents.

"I love when former students contact me and let me know how successful they are now," she said.

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