

Bill Brown

Clifton William Brown Jr. was born on July 3, 1952, to Clifton Sr. and Edwina Brown in St. Louis, MO. He has a sister, Treva Hickok, who resides with her husband Larry in Wichita, KS. The family resided on the river in Fenton, later known as the Fenton Hotel. In 1953, they relocated to House Springs when Clifton's father assumed the position of manager at W.H. Powell Lumber Co. His mother was employed at the Bank of House Springs.

Mr. Brown attended House Springs Elementary School from grades 1 to 6, where his first principal was Mrs. Long, later succeeded by Mr. Alan Schell. For junior high, he attended the school adjacent to the Northwest Campus in House Springs for two years before moving on to Northwest High School for the following four years. Throughout his high school years, Bill actively participated in extracurricular activities, serving on the student council for four years, being a member of the National Honor Society, and holding the position of class vice president during his senior year. Additionally, Bill's dedicated his time to sports, playing both football and basketball.

Following high school graduation in 1970, Bill Brown pursued higher education at Southwest Missouri State University for five years. Initially, he enrolled as a Wildlife Conservation Major but later changed his major twice, first to Biology and then to Physical Education.

While attending Southwest Missouri State University, Bill Brown had the opportunity to meet his future wife, Debbie. They tied the knot after graduation on November 6, 1976. Initially residing in Maryland Heights, which conveniently positioned them midway between House Springs and Debbie's workplace at McCluer North High School, they later relocated to Fenton, MO. Together, they are proud parents of two sons, Jason (married to Chrissy) and Zachary. Their family expanded with the arrival of three grandchildren: Cooper and Riley (children of Jason and Chrissy) and Bryson (son of Zach).

Bill's journey in the field of education commenced with his student teaching assignments. He began at Rountree Elementary School in Springfield, teaching Physical Education, before transitioning to Greenwood High School for the same subject. Additionally, he spent a semester working with students with disabilities in the special education program at Kickapoo High School, also located in Springfield.

With graduation early in May, Bill Brown found himself back home, where he seized the opportunity to work as a substitute teacher. The timing aligned perfectly when Mr. Schell, the principal, informed him of a PE teacher going on maternity leave, offering Bill the chance to fill in as a full-time substitute until the end of the school year. However, when the incumbent teacher decided to extend her leave to care for her newborn in mid-summer, Bill was presented with his inaugural teaching contract to instruct P.E. at House Springs Elementary.

Challenges awaited him at HSE, particularly in the realm of physical education. The P.E. classes were conducted in a compact trailer with a ceiling height of merely 7 feet, thus imposing limitations on activity choices. Weather permitting, outdoor fields became the alternate venue. As construction commenced on the new gym, Bill adapted, conducting classes either in individual classrooms or outdoors. He transformed ordinary classrooms into makeshift gyms, moving desks to accommodate gym mats and equipment. Upon the completion of the new gym, a plethora of programs and activities became feasible.

To address students' needs, Bill initiated remedial physical education sessions during his prep time and lunch breaks. Capitalizing on the excitement surrounding the Olympics, he introduced a gymnastics program, recruiting talented students to participate. Practice sessions were held at the school, where students choreographed their own floor routines to music. The culmination of the school year was marked by the introduction of "Field Day," an event featuring numerous classroom-based activities and overall fun for everyone involved. Despite the considerable effort required, the rewards of these endeavors were unequivocally gratifying. After spending nine years at HSE, Bill Brown transitioned to Northwest High School, a move facilitated by his involvement in coaching football and serving as the Varsity Girls Basketball Coach. His coaching journey began in his inaugural year, initially as an unpaid Girls Basketball coach, responding to a request for assistance from Ann Faust, the then-coach. Following Faust's departure, Coach Garrett, the Athletic Director, officially appointed Bill to the role. Concurrently, he commenced his tenure as a Biology and Botany teacher, finding invaluable support from colleagues such as Jim White, Bonnie Long, Jim Choate, and the entire science wing.

After two years in this capacity, Sue Smart approached Bill with an opportunity to join the Physical Education Department, an offer he enthusiastically accepted. This marked the beginning of a long and fulfilling chapter of his career, lasting until his retirement in 2007.

During his time at Northwest High School, Bill contributed to the implementation of new course offerings, notably collaborating with Kristy Lee and Amy Brown to develop the curriculum for "Walking for Fitness," a course tailored to accommodate students who may not be athletically inclined or have physical limitations, providing them with an avenue to engage in exercise or fulfill their P.E. requirements.

Bill Brown coached football, baseball, Girl's basketball, and softball, in addition to dedicating 42 years to boys' basketball. His coaching career was marked by the privilege of mentoring numerous talented young men and women. Notably, he had the pleasure of coaching Hall of Fame athletes such as Andy Guethle, Rich Stephens, Debbie Stark, and Brandy La Jeunesse. Throughout his tenure, Bill had the opportunity to both learn from and coach alongside esteemed individuals like Jim Snell, Paul Haug, Jack Morrison, Jim Choate, Greg Fortner, and many others.

One of the highlights of his coaching career was the 20-9 season in Boys Basketball, during which his team achieved significant success. They clinched victories at the Hillsboro Tournament, the St. Dominic Christmas Tournament, and secured second place at the Union Tournament. Additionally, they emerged victorious in their district and Sectional games, propelling them to the Elite Eight in the state tournament. Unfortunately, their journey ended with a loss to DeSmet at UMSL, just shy of reaching the final four. For his outstanding leadership that season, Bill was honored as the regional coach of the year by KJCF radio.

Bill attributes much of his success to the support of his exceptional assistant coaches, with Dr. Stella Viehland serving as a valuable manager, and the entire team of players who contributed to the magic of that season. Grateful for the collaboration with administrators, teachers, custodians, cafeteria workers, and, most importantly, the students, Bill extends his heartfelt thanks to all who have been part of his journey.

Coach Brown is a kind but competitive character that so many Northwest students remember fondly. He is most deserving of the honor "Distinguished Educator" for his accomplishments in the classroom as well as his impact on student-athletes. Let's provide a warm welcome Clifton William Brown Jr., as he joins the Northwest Distinguished Educator Hall of Fame.