



LEGACY LEDGER

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER OF LEGACY NAFC ALUMNI



*A Message from the NAFC Education Foundation
Alumni Coordinator, Sherri McKeen*

November is a time to honor and express gratitude for the brave men and women who have served our country. In this issue, we are proud to spotlight two remarkable NAFC alumni who exemplify the courage and dedication of our veterans.

We're also thrilled to share updates on the Legacy NAFC Alumni Royal Court campaign, now at its halfway point, thanks to the incredible generosity of alumni and supporters like you.

As you continue reading, we're excited to introduce you to Shane Stuber, the new Executive Director of the NAFC Education Foundation. Shane brings a wealth of experience and a heartfelt commitment to our mission, and we can't wait for you to meet him!

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Amanda Beam, Guest Contributor

Each November, our nation recognizes the triumphs and sacrifices of those who have served in the United States' Armed Forces. Their dedication and bravery to our country preserve our freedoms and sustain our American way of life.

This month, we honor two such remarkable individuals. One entered the Navy as a signalman during a time of war, just two years after graduating New Albany High School. The other, a Floyd Central graduate, flew helicopters for the Marine Corp, offering support to his fellow corpsmen and humanitarian aid to those suffering unimaginable tragedy.

These distinguished warriors are but two of the countless men and women who have graduated from NAFCS schools and then entered military service. We salute each and every one of our veterans and give thanks for their strength and commitment to the United States.

Derek Cook (FCHS '01): Nothing but clear skies for Marine One pilot

A Squadron Commander once told Derek Cook if you give someone enough rope, they either hang themselves, or they swing to great heights.

Derek's accolades and accomplishments, both personal and professional, prove not even the sky is the limit for the 2001 Floyd Central High School grad.

The 42-year-old's resume reads like a lead from a blockbuster action movie.

2005 United States Naval Academy graduate. Marine heavy lift helicopter pilot. Awarded five air medals. Master's degree in Leadership Studies from Marshall University. Loving husband and proud father of five. White House Military Office liaison. Commercial jet aviator.

And presidential helicopter pilot for not just one of America's Commander in Chiefs, but three.

"The Navy's slogan used to be 'It's not just a job, it's an adventure'. And really, that's probably the number one thing that I love about it," Derek said. "If you want to go have an adventure, you can have it in the military."

Born to now retired NAFCS teachers Jerry and Linda Cook, Derek's high school activities spanned the spectrum. Not only did he play soccer and baseball, but he also served on Student Council and performed in band. It took going away to the US Naval Academy and meeting cadets from other schools for him to appreciate the caliber of the education he received during those formative years.



As a student, I took for granted all of the quality programs we had access to. It took me a while to realize that level of excellence in sports, academics, and fine arts is rare in a public school,” Derek said. “I’m very thankful for the foundation Floyd Central laid for me, and I’m very thankful for the countless hours the teachers, and parents throughout the community worked to shape that experience.”

After graduating the US Naval Academy with a bachelor’s degree in Economics, Derek was commissioned into the US Marine Corps, receiving an aviation contract. From the start, he dreamed of becoming Maverick from Top Gun, flying fighter jets across a blue sky. Fate had other plans. At the time of his aircraft selection, only helicopters were available. Upon his winging, he was assigned to fly CH-53E heavy lift helicopters out a Miramar air station in San Diego, CA.

Gritty is the term Derek used to describe this first half of his aviation career. He and his squadron responded to disasters such as the massive 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, delivering food, water and supplies to remote villages throughout West Sumatra. Deployment to Afghanistan followed, where he supported Operation Enduring Freedom.

“During those years, we were flying long hours, in hydraulic fluid-soaked flight suits, at night, with dirty aircraft to remote locations,” he said. “At the end of the mission, the reward was getting people or things where they needed to go safely.”



In 2019, Lewis was elected chairman of the Harvest Homecoming board, making her not only one of the youngest ever in that leadership role, but the first and only African-American chairperson, as well.

In 2020, with vaccines still months away, Covid raged throughout America. That June, due to safety concerns, Harvest Homecoming organizers made the tough decision to cancel the October celebration for the first time in its 51-year history.

“Every flight was conducted within a high visibility environment, with shiny aircraft, dress uniforms, media present, cameras flashing, and world leaders onboard. Those missions took me around the world; to the base of the Eiffel Tower; Nairobi, Kenya; Delhi, India; Lima, Peru; and many other destinations around the globe,” Derek said. “With those missions came a sense of pride that we were always on point, and our decision-making as a pilot had to be perfect.”

In 2018, Derek shifted to civilian life. While he continues his military service as a Marine reservist, the aviator also pilots jets for a major commercial airline. His exciting journeys haven’t been interrupted, though. He finds more than enough adventures with his wife Vanessa and their children in their Orlando home.

Looking back at his career, and understanding dreams, like becoming a Marine Maverick, might not have always happened as he planned, Derek offered advice to students still at Floyd Central.

“There were a half-dozen other times throughout my career that I wanted something, but didn't get it,” he said. “Even though things didn't work out like I had hoped, things worked out for the best. ‘Bloom where you're planted’. If you don't get what you want, take a breath, and continue to grind. Things may turn out better than you ever expected.”

Jack Coffman (NAHS '67): Military service evolved into lifelong service to Southern Indiana

More than 8,000 miles away from his Indiana hometown, Jack Coffman stood on the deck of a US Navy destroyer near the coast of Vietnam and signaled to nearby ships. With war raging in the southeast Asian nation, naval vessels helped protect themselves by going radio silent. Yet, communication between ships remained a necessity.

That's where Jack came in. At times, he maneuvered flags to visually spell out coded words. In other circumstances, the enlisted man would operate a light to transmit needed messages.

"You had to be careful. You didn't want to make a mistake," Jack said. "They don't have that (problem) now. It's all more modernized."

But before completing two tours of duty in Vietnam, Jack was raised off of Highway 150 in rural Floyd County. He remembered remembering waking up early to ride the school bus his father drove, transferring at Galena for the haul to New Albany High School. His class of 1967 would be the last to graduate from NAHS before Floyd Central High opened the following school year.

While at NAHS, Jack took part in the agricultural program led by teacher James Ward. Not only did these classes teach students about the mechanics of farming, but imparted lessons in business as well. During his time at NAHS, Jack also joined Future Farmers of America, and continued his agricultural education by receiving on-the-job work experience. He and other students spent the second half of their school day working for the New Albany Parks Department. His biggest contribution was helping to build Sam Peden Community Park.

"I tell you the thing that what we learned most in agriculture through Mr. Ward and through FFA is leadership skills," Jack said. "There were several of us that were involved in FFA that became pretty successful business people today."

After graduating from NAHS, Jack attended college, but decided it wasn't his thing. Instead, he went to work at Sears Department Store.

Two years later, the Floyd County native joined the Navy as a signalman. On his leave from bootcamp, he wed Irene, his high school sweetheart. Three children and 55-years later, they remain happily married.

During his four years in the service, Jack served as signalman on Navy destroyers. On his second deployment to Vietnam, he worked onboard the USS John S. McCain, a guided-missile destroyer that was named after the grandfather of the future Senator John S. McCain III.

"Being in the Navy, there was lots of challenging work," Jack said. "You had to be responsible, because you worked with a team of men in your departments. And if one person was weak, then your whole department was weak."



Upon returning home to Southern Indiana after completing his military service, Jack and his wife soon started their own chimney sweeping business that also specialized in sales and safety.

“But in the chimney sweep business, you either retire or you fall,” he said.

After 25-years, Jack chose to retire.

And yet he still wanted to work. So, the Borden resident obtained his real estate broker license and for 22 more years sold area homes.

Alongside his owning these small businesses, Jack also entered elected office, first for a four -year term as a Clark County council member, followed by 12 years as a Clark County Commissioner. Having won reelection earlier this month, Jack will begin his fifth term on the county commissioners this January. He’s proud of his public service, especially his work with helping to develop River Ridge Commerce Center, an industrial park in Jeffersonville.



“We have accomplished a lot here in Clark County. We're one of the fastest growing counties in the state,” he said. “Everybody talked about Indianapolis for years and years and years, but now Southern Indiana is the crossroads of America... River Ridge is the largest industrial complex east of the Mississippi. And right now, we have the largest construction project going on in Indiana, with Meta.”

Through it all, Jack continues to give thanks to his family for their love and support.

“I have a blessing of a wonderful wife who's went through all this with me. We started a business together, and just continued on,” Jack said. “I got a wonderful, wonderful family. They all live close by. I'm a blessed man.”



JOIN US ON FACEBOOK!

Stay updated on your Floyd County classmates, discover thrilling events in your NAFC school community, and learn firsthand about the NAFC Education Foundation by connecting with us at facebook.com/LegacyNAFCAlumni.



Support the Legacy NAFC Alumni Royal Court!

Meet eight extraordinary alumni who are competing in the third annual **Legacy NAFC Alumni Royal Court** to champion the students and educators of NAFC schools. These community leaders are rallying to raise funds for the Education Foundation, and their efforts directly impact the lives of countless students and teachers.

Thanks to generous supporters like you, the Education Foundation achieved incredible milestones last year, including:

- **Over 150 Great Classroom Grants funded**, bringing innovation and creativity to NAFC classrooms.
- Launching **Mental Health Grants** to meet the growing need for emotional and social support for our students and educators.
- Delivering **40,000 free books** to young learners through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, sparking a love of reading and learning.
- Ensuring **1,800 students receive weekend meals** through Blessings in a Backpack, so no child goes hungry.
- Equipping **65 new educators** with essential resources to ease financial burdens and set them up for success.

These programs make a tangible difference in the NAFC community—but we can't do it without you.

Will you join us in **supporting a Royal Court candidate?**

Your donation not only backs their campaign but also fuels life-changing initiatives that strengthen our schools and build a brighter future for our students.

Choose a candidate to support today and help them win the coveted Royal Court crown—because when we invest in education, everyone wins.

[Donate Today](#)

Meet Shane Stuber: The New Executive Director of the NAFC Education Foundation



The New Albany Floyd County Education Foundation is excited to welcome Shane Stuber as its new Executive Director. Shane brings a wealth of experience, a passion for education, and a deep connection to the New Albany Floyd County community to his new role.

Shane's journey to this position is rooted in his admiration for the Foundation's transformative impact within NAFC schools. With his background in nonprofit leadership, most recently as Executive Director of the Trilogy Foundation, Shane saw an opportunity to combine his professional experience with his love for this community. "The Education Foundation has made such a difference in the lives of our students and teachers. I'm excited to contribute to its continued success," he shares.

Shane's ties to the NAFC school system run deep as a parent of both current and former NAFC students and the spouse of a staff member at New Albany High School. Over the past 13 years, Shane has been immersed in the community, from volunteering with local organizations to serving as an assistant soccer coach at New Albany High School. These roles have given him firsthand insights into the challenges and opportunities that students, teachers, and families face. "I've seen the impact of our schools on our students' lives and the unique ways this community rallies together to address challenges," he reflects.

Shane is eager to connect with NAFC alumni to build on the Foundation's mission. He believes alumni play a vital role in supporting the success of current and future students. "It takes a village," he says, emphasizing that collective efforts are essential to identifying gaps, addressing needs, and creating opportunities.

Under Shane's leadership, the Foundation will continue championing innovative programs like Great Classroom Grants, Blessings in a Backpack, and more. His vision centers on strengthening the Foundation's community partnerships to ensure every student and teacher in New Albany Floyd County has the resources they need to thrive.

Join us in welcoming Shane Stuber as he leads the NAFC Education Foundation into its next chapter of impact and growth.



WANT TO CHECK OUT PAST EDITIONS OF THE LEGACY LEDGER?

Visit our [Alumni Newsroom!](#)



The New Albany Floyd County Education Foundation is a not-for-profit organization that works in conjunction with NAFC Schools to provide privately funded supplemental resources and programs to students, teachers, and schools. Legacy NAFC is the official alumni support group of the NAFC Education Foundation and New Albany Floyd County Schools.

When alumni donate to the New Albany Floyd County Education Foundation, you are investing in the success of all NAFC Schools students and educators. Alumni donors become Legacy NAFC members through an annual donation.

Make your impact today and become a Legacy NAFC Alumni Member!

For more information, contact Sherri McKeen at smckeen@nafcs.org or 812-542-2242 at the NAFC Education Foundation.

www.NAFCEdFoundation.org/alumni



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