Why am I sharing my athletic story with you? Because I want you to be better than me. I want you to be more successful than me and I want you to share your story with the youth that are coming behind you. Be that individual that makes your family, friends and community proud. Be the best that you can be and I promise you, your story will be worth telling for years to come. With that thought in mind, let me take you back to the beginning of my athletic career which began in fifth grade, Tecumseh elementary school.

Whistles blowing, running, jumping and doing things I did at the playground, at the park and in my neighborhood, was now being taught by someone who actually knew the rules versus us making them up as we went along. This was very different, but I liked the learning environment and the competiveness. Just because you were the fastest, strongest and or biggest, didn’t mean that you were the best or that you were going to play. It helped, but I now found that determination, dedication, respect and leadership was valuable. It began to surface among my teammates and I as the years flew by and the coaches groomed our talents along the way. It didn’t matter what your religion or nationality was. It didn’t matter if you were rich, poor, skinny, fat, tall or short, it was all about your willingness to be a part of a team, work hard and apply yourself. I watched some really good playground athletes quit because they didn’t like being told what to do. Others didn’t like getting in shape or thought they should be calling the shots. Slowly but surely, those individuals who are still my friends, disappeared from the organized sports arena. Some were playground legends, just not for Xenia High School.

As I look back, I had a lot of athletic ability, but it was my teammates who helped me achieve the numerous awards I received. I made sure to let them know along the way with their own forms of recognition. For example, I often said nice block, great pass, sweet assist, a pat on the back, a high five or just a man hug showed my appreciation for a job well done.

Athletics went far beyond the particular teams I participated on. It leaked into the classrooms, hallways and into the community. We had to maintain a certain grade point average to play. Our classmates would praise us if we won and were able to recite highlights as if they played in the game with us. They felt and shared our heartaches when we lost and often would be more disappointed than we were. The community really made us feel special. The majority of the community knew us by name. Store owners would put banners up prior to game days and we received discounts from certain restaurants. It was a great time growing up in Xenia and being a Buccaneer. We had our sad times, but for the most part, it was a great time. I must talk about one event that not only rattled the entire nation, but has had a lasting effect on the community, but more so my graduating class. That event was the April 3, 1974 tornado. It robbed my graduating class the opportunity to attend school in a High School building. We ended up attending High School in the same building that we attended as Junior High School students. The administration, faculty and students made it work. That class of over 550 seniors became a very close knit family. We did a number of things to overcome adversity and to this day, there are a number of us that are still extremely close.

Fast forward to a accepting a college basketball scholarship, graduating from West Virginia State College and obtaining a Master’s degree from Antioch McGregor Midwest. Wow, time does go by fast and no one has the power to stop the life clock. I still must say, that my fondest memories in life are still from Xenia High School. My classmate friendships, respect for teachers, coaches, and community members still hold a special place in

My parents, Edward L. Wingard and Barbara D. Wingard were most instrumental in raising me. As an adult, I now know that they knew the value of participating in sports as a child and young adult were invaluable. Their encourgement, strict rules in the home, echoed what was being taught in the gymnasium, on the football field and on the track. I would say it kept me out of trouble, but I wasn’t that kind of kid, nor my brothers (smile).

It’s easy to take short cuts. It’s even easier to quit. One thing for sure, there is a price you pay for success.

Curtis Wingard

XHS Class of 1977