

Rodney ✓

Vanderheiden, 62

Nov. 24, 1954 - Died Dates



BEDFORD – Rodney Dean Vanderheiden was born on November 24, 1954 to John and Neoma (Popp) Vanderheiden in Carroll. He was baptized at St. Lawrence Catholic Church in Carroll, and confirmed at St. Michael's Catholic Church in Harlan. He attended K-12 in Harlan and graduated from Harlan Community High School in 1973. He was an athletic trainer in high school for the football and wrestling teams, and was part of the 1972 Harlan State Championship football team.

Rodney went on to graduate with a Bachelor of Science Degree (Physical Education) from Iowa State University in 1978. While in college he was an athletic trainer for the football and wrestling teams. While a wrestling trainer, he was part of the 1977 NCAA National Championship team, coached by Harold Nichols. He was also an athletic trainer for the Iowa State Cyclone football team coached by Earl Bruce. He was a thesis short of obtaining his Masters Degree in Guidance Counseling.

After graduating from Iowa State University, he became the head athletic trainer at North Scott High School in Eldridge and was also a Health Education teacher. There, he was instrumental in building the athletic training program into one of the finest in eastern Iowa. In 1985, Rodney left North Scott to take a position at Bedford High School as a Science teacher and head girl's basketball coach. During his career at Bedford (27 years) he also taught Middle School General Science, was a Guidance Counselor for a number of years, served as Athletic Director, coached girl's softball, and some football. Rodney, better known as "Mr. V" retired from Bedford Community Schools in 2012.

Upon retirement, he spent much of his time working on his collection of sports trading cards, coins, postcards, stamps, first day issues, and sports memorabilia. He also enjoyed visiting family during this time.

Around 2000, Rodney was diagnosed with an eye condition called Retinitis Pigmentosa. This is a hereditary eye condition that occurs later in life, where peripheral vision (horizontal or vertical) is gradually lost. He was considered legally blind due to this condition, and because of this went through training at the Iowa Department of the Blind to learn life skills to deal with this condition.

Rodney enjoyed sports very much and loved to watch and talk about it. Throughout his educational career, he received several teacher of the year awards. "Mr. V" also served as chief contract negotiator for the teachers for many years. While coach of the Bedford girl's basketball program for six years, the teams went 76-55, and 53-41 in his four years as softball coach. The 1987-88 girl's basketball team went 22-3, losing in the Regional Finals to Treynor.

Rodney had a passion for teaching and helping students and also for helping others. He touched many lives throughout his career through his teaching, coaching, guidance counseling, and being a trusted friend. He loved his family very much and loved to spend time with them visiting and watching sports.

He became a resident of the Bedford Specialty Care Facility in November of 2016 due to his battle with cancer. This is where he passed away on Tuesday, April 4, 2017 at the age of 62. He was preceded in death by his father, John Vanderheiden, and all of his grandparents.

He is survived by his mother, Neoma Vanderheiden, of Harlan; his brother, Lindsey Vanderheiden and his wife Stephanie of Longmont, CO; a nephew, Jordan Vanderheiden of Longmont, CO; niece, Michaela Vanderheiden of Colorado Springs, CO; and other family members and many friends.

Funeral Celebration of Life Services were held Saturday, April 8, 2017, at 10 a.m. at the New Life Missionary Church in Bedford. Visitation was held Friday at the Ritchie Funeral Home from 3 to 7. Interment was held at the Harlan Cemetery at 3 p.m.. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be directed to the Bedford Community School. Memories may be shared at www.ritchiefuneralhome.com. Arrangements were entrusted to the Ritchie Funeral Home of Bedford.

Mr. V will be remembered by his peers and students as a strong leader and educator in the Bedford Community. May he be at peace in God's loving care.