

Darryl J. Ford on Debbie White  
OPC Weekend

Gummere Distinguished Teacher Award  
Friday, May 6, 2022

It is with great pleasure that I make a few remarks about our colleague and friend Debbie White, who receives the Gummere Distinguished Teacher Award this evening.

Debbie came to Penn Charter in 1988, and in her 34 years of service, she has positively affected students throughout the entire school. Having served as the second athletic director of girls athletics from 1989 – 2006, Debbie played a seminal role in building a program of excellence for female student athletes. As the Health and Physical Education Department Chair for more than a decade, Debbie emphasized fitness and mental toughness and well-being for all students. She has taught in every division and probably every grade at Penn Charter.

Most notable is Debbie's service as the Upper School girls lacrosse coach from 1989 until 2007. All who played for Debbie know her to be a fierce competitor. She encouraged her student athletes both to win on the field and in life. Recently while coaching middle school girls lacrosse and basketball, Debbie instilled in her player the same tenacity of action and spirit – all happening with Mrs. White coaching and screaming – encouraging – from the sideline just as she coached her Upper School girls. No matter what the age group she works with, Debbie builds skills, and teaches with passion, and achieves winning results.

Because of her tremendous positive influence on student athletes, recently Debbie was honored by the Penn Charter Alumni Association with its decision to dedicate and name the women's locker room in the new Graham Center for Athletics & Wellness in her honor. In addition, last year Debbie received the Michael F. Mayock Distinguished Teacher-Coach Award which is given to an individual who possesses, and imparts to their student-athletes the highest level of integrity, professionalism, and for their concern for the "total" education of the student-athlete.

Perhaps, the greatest accolades Debbie has received over the years come from her student athletes themselves. One letter sent to Debbie in 1999 by Jennifer Albright, Katherine Park, Stephanie Straup, Latrisha Chattin, Lizzie Roller, Meghan Walters, Kate Ginty, Sarah Shacklett, and Maggie White, captures the impact that Debbie has had on legions of devotees. They wrote:

When a person plays lacrosse for you, there is a feeling that they carry inside. It is there all year and during the spring it spreads and grows. The feeling comes from the knowledge that we are part of something special, enjoying an experience that will stay with us the rest of our lives.

As a coach you drive us further and have taught us never to back down from a challenge....While there is no doubt in the ability you have both to play and coach

the game of lacrosse, we also realize that what you are teaching us are valuable skills for the rest of our lives.

Watching the grace and good nature, with which you raise your kids, has taught us about the kind of mothers we aspire to be. Listening to your speeches, playing on your field, and striving to meet the standards you set has shaped who we are already....Our admiration and gratitude towards you will never dwindle.

Debbie White, for all you have done and continue to do for the William Penn Charter School, our admiration and gratitude are deep and will never dwindle.

Congratulations on being the recipient of the Gummere Distinguished Teacher Award.