

February 2022

To Our Fort Thomas Families,

I have been privileged to witness the unparalleled community support in Fort Thomas from a host of vantage points, and each experience is remarkable in its own way. As a parent, coach, teacher, principal, and now in my first year as Superintendent, it is inspiring to me to see our students and staff pursue their ambitions both in and out of the classroom—to really push the limits of what they can accomplish, both individually and collectively, in the pursuit of growth and achievement. The Fort Thomas tradition is the energizing manner in which the community has backed their efforts every step of the way. It is unique and generational.

Just a few weeks ago, we woke up to temperatures well below freezing and in the teens in Fort Thomas. On a frigid Saturday morning, Woodfill principal Keith Faust texted a colleague, “Just the way I like it. I wouldn’t want it any other way.”

Mr. Faust had made a promise. True to his word, he was making the trip along with a caravan of Woodfill families to an event at the Banks, which sits right next door to the home of the Cincinnati Reds at Great American Ball Park. Dressed boldly for the occasion in a golf shirt and shorts, while everyone else was shivering in coats and gloves, Mr. Faust was ready (if one can ever truly be ready to do this) to dive into the chilly waters of a pool constructed for the occasion. Bob Herzog emceed the Polar Plunge for WKRC-TV and asked Mr. Faust, “Are you ready, sir?” And then Mr. Herzog followed up with a quip, “The answer to that is rarely a ‘yes!’”

I will defer to our coaches in the swimming and diving program, but I believe Mr. Faust’s impressive effort qualifies as a cannonball. He dove in and did so enthusiastically, a promise fulfilled after our generous community surpassed a fundraising goal of more than \$1,000 for Woodfill’s Unified Club donation to Special Olympics programs. A few years ago, the school completed construction on bocce courts and Unified Sports have truly galvanized the Woodfill school community. On game days, the bocce participants often wear their jerseys during the school day and it is common for both players and fans to gather on the front lawn as the participants revel in the spirited and friendly competition with their coaches and teammates.

Engaged and unified is when we are at our best in Fort Thomas. We salute the incredible efforts of our students, families, faculty, staff and leadership as we have navigated challenging times. We have had successes and setbacks, as well as agreements and disagreements. Each day has brought renewed and exciting ways to gather as one community to support both academics and extracurricular activities. We find our common ground and shared purpose. We share a commitment to provide every resource possible for our students to have once-in-a-lifetime memories and experiences in our schools.

The short days and cold spells of winter can create cabin fever but it is inspiring to see our students in action. We find our spark when we experience filled seats in the Performing Arts Center, not only for student-led theatre productions in the high school and middle school programs, but also for our elementary students to showcase their abilities in “Moyer’s Got Talent,” music concerts, and the upcoming Middle School Talent Show. It is a busy time along Highland Avenue, as the youngest Mustangs will once again take the stage this week for Moyer’s “Kindergarten Circus”, a community tradition that always delivers smiles on the stage and in the audience. Community members and families are able to enjoy our talented artists as they observe elementary and secondary art shows in their schools, local businesses, and colleges. I am cheering enthusiastically for our winter sports programs as they have their sights

set on regional and state tournaments. And I am excited, as our weather warms up even more, to see our participants spray painted from head to toe taking part in the aptly-named Johnson Color Run.

Our region thoroughly enjoyed the Bengals' run to the Super Bowl and while it was a disappointing ending for Cincinnati fans, my hope is that this is the beginning of great things for our NFL team, culminating in a confetti-filled Super Bowl parade for our region. It seemed to unify us after two years of challenges, and just thinking about the Bengals taking the next step and winning it all gets me excited for next season. Symbolically, it can also show our students in Fort Thomas what's possible—that they, too, can perform on one of the largest stages in sports and it's not in any way out of reach for any child in our district. Four dance coaches in Fort Thomas are still dancers in their own right, as members of the Ben-Gals Cheerleaders team. They traveled to Los Angeles to participate in community events and perform on the field at the Super Bowl. Samantha Reynolds (HHS varsity coach), Megan Reynolds (HMS coach), Corinne Holmes (HHS varsity assistant coach) and Hannah Montgomery (JV coach) said they hope their achievement carries an overarching message, not only to the dancers they coach but to any student in Fort Thomas.

Samantha Reynolds teaches second grade at Woodfill and as students lined the hallways for a Super Bowl sendoff, Ms. Reynolds said, "I used to go to school in Fort Thomas. I used to dance at Highlands. This could one day be you, too." Yes, it could. Hard work and passion forged a path to perform under perhaps the brightest lights in sports. We are so fortunate to have our Fort Thomas dancers learn, on a daily basis, from some of the very best.

Let's keep cheering each other on as we pursue our ambitions. Whether it's a Polar Plunge from Mr. Faust, or a dance routine, or a song performed at the Performing Arts Center, or an art show, we are at our best as a community when we stand united behind the exceptional people that make our schools blossom.

Sincerely,
Brian