

March 6, 2024

Sweet Home Central School District

1901 Sweet Home Road

Amherst, NY 14228

Dear Superintendent Dr. Michael V. Ginestre and Honorable Members of the Board,

I would like to take a minute of your time to recognize a member of your school district, in his role as the Sweet Home Varsity Basketball Coach, Brandon Woods. For many students their athletic chapters end in high school their senior year. Most that participate in sports and compete at the varsity level have been with their respective sports head coach for a couple years. These coaches, just as academic teachers, can have a profound and lasting affect on a students life. This is that story.

My wife and I have twin sons graduating from Sweet Home this year that both started playing high school sports in 7th grade at the modified level. One played football and the other, Landon, played basketball. That being the case, I am able to give you an objective opinion as we have seen and been part of modified, JV and Varsity programs in two separate sports. I am aware head coaches are paid for what they do. However, whatever amount Coach Woods is being paid would never fairly compensate him for the amount of time and love he puts into this program. Coach Brandon Woods is, Sweet Home Basketball. The minute Landon made the varsity team he was welcomed in and made part of the "program." This is a 24/7 basketball program that Coach Woods is in constant contact with. For the past two years we were a basketball family where the off-season was just as important as the actual season itself. Landon would have daily updates on what he should be doing to help the team in his personal role, and also what the team would be participating in. Coach Woods runs it all and I never saw so much as a hiccup at any event. Off-season tournaments, get-togethers, camps, spring games, summer games, meetings, there was never an off time. One of the many trips he organized was for a tournament at Binghamton University. What an experience that was for the young men who participated. While there I would always make conversation with staff personnel and other people in the basketball community. So many times, people would ask where we were from. After telling them Sweet Home High School in the Buffalo area I would get responses like "oh you're with Brandon Woods, he's an incredible coach." Our conversation would then veer off into how at some point he was a part of their basketball program, one way or another.

On a personal level our story is just as sincere. My family had no idea who Coach Woods was prior to my son playing basketball. I think it's pretty fair to say basketball is a sport where being really tall helps. My son Landon is 5ft 6" so height wasn't in the cards. But what he lacks in

height he makes up for in drive. Landon's drive to succeed combined with his excellent attitude is a combination for success. However, none of that matters if you don't have someone that not only recognizes it, but pushes and supports it. When Landon was on JV and didn't play a lot, I often saw someone talking to him on the bench. After the game I would ask him who was talking to him and what did he say? Landon said, "that's the varsity coach, Coach Woods. He said if I keep moving the ball well and really practice my shooting, he will have a spot for me on Varsity." You have no idea what that statement did for my son. That 2 min conversation gave my son more confidence than he ever had before. Over that summer my son put in the work, and Coach Woods continued the guidance. My son finished his junior year as the teams best shooter, and also continued to work tirelessly for Coach Woods. As he began his senior year, he was named one of the teams Captains. This past year has been incredible. Although the team didn't win any titles, that's not what's important to growing young men. It's all about the experience. Coach Woods is a family man with a wonderful supporting wife and young children. The time he spends with our boys and sacrifices he makes for them and the basketball program are commensurate with that of a full-time coach. It further serves my point that I have never seen such dedication.

In summary, I cannot express enough the impact Coach Woods has left on my family, and most importantly, my son. During summer workouts I would often see past players at the gym. In getting to know some of them they are back for all the reasons I have stated here. Coach Woods impacted their life. The Sweet Home School District is lucky to have Coach Woods. With his professionalism, attitude and knowledge of the game I sometimes found it hard to believe he hasn't moved on to a higher level of play. Honestly, I believe what keeps him grounded here is simple, he loves Sweet Home. In my final thought ill share with you my sons last game in the Sweet Home gym; their first playoff game. It was perhaps my son's best game ever. The gym was pretty full with Sweet Home family members, students and past players. My son made 5 out of 7 three-point shots and led their team to a victory- it was incredible. As tradition has it some of the JV players that will be part of the team the next year were brought up to be part of the excitement of varsity playoff basketball. Seeing a short player excel can be inspiring to younger players. At the conclusion of this game many of them asked my son where he's going to play college basketball. My sons answer sums up everything I have said. My son is done playing school basketball, this chapter of his life has closed. There are two main reasons my son loved playing basketball. He loved playing with his teammates for Sweet Home, and he loved playing for Coach Woods.

Very Respectfully,

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