

North Branch Area Schools “Person of the Week”

Welcome to our NBAS Person of the Week! Each week, we highlight a member of our incredible team to showcase their unique contributions and share a bit about their journey. This week, we’re shining the spotlight on Al Margrif, NBHS social studies teacher, coach and district Athletic Director. Al is been an integral force in the building and nurturing of North Branch’s athletic facilities and programs over the last several years. Al is known for his exceptional leadership and dedication to our students, both in the classroom and on the field. His commitment to their academic and athletic develop is truly inspiring.



How long have you worked for NBAS?

This is my 8th year at NBHS, 6th year as both an Athletic Director & Teacher at NB, and my 25th overall as an educator, including my time before returning to the North Branch Area. I teach US History to freshmen each morning during 1st and 2nd hours. After that, my athletics work begins. Also, I coach HS track & field in the spring as an assistant, focusing upon the shot put and the discus toss events for both boys and girls.

I am a former k-12 Bronco. I began attending school w/ Mrs. Quast’s pm kindergarten class in the fall of 1983. Early on my family lived on Lawndale St. Later we moved to Fish Lake Road. My grandparents lived on West Burnside Road when I was a kid.

What has been your favorite part of working here? What aspect of your job do you find most rewarding?

First and foremost, working in a classroom every morning with students is usually the favorite part of my day. Additionally, I feel like I’m a small part of a “Golden Age of NB Athletics”. We are able to tackle so many athletics projects and are advancing programs quickly. These things aren’t possible without hardworking and dedicated coaches, a supportive school board and administration, dedicated volunteers, motivated talented athletic boosters, and excellent school of choice numbers. They all make my job very easy when I consider challenges that some other districts face.

I’m a visual person, so being able to work on projects that are visible around the district and that enhance our surroundings is something rewarding to me. With our boosters, volunteers, and alums, we are able to realize dreams and visions that many of us talked about as student-athletes 30 years ago.

Do all of our sacrifices as educators eventually add up to anything in the long run?

I'm a very sentimental person. I closed my eyes and in 3 mins I listed the following teachers and administrators on a notepad. My teachers, the ones that I could remember taking care of me as a student at NBAS: Mrs. Quast, Mrs. Diegel, Mrs. Rogers, Mrs. Montgomery, Mrs. Bodnar, Mrs. Johnson & Miss Savage, Miss Hunt, Mrs. Picarski, Mr. Maxwell, Mr. Overzet, Mrs. Kilbourn, Mr. Fauble, Mr. Picarski, Mr. Johnson, Mrs. Martus, Mr. Tuttle, Mrs. Fiedor, Mrs. Jankowski, Mr. White, Mr. Bone, Mrs. Roper, Mrs. Stevenson, Mr. Lambert, Mr. Piwinski, Mr. Kilbourn, Mr. Schliecher, Mrs. Bethel, Mr. Yoder, Mr. Peplinski, Mr. Zeeman, Mrs. Gartee, Mrs. Benson, Mr. Turner, Mr. Schnieder, Mrs. LeTourneau, Mr. Hiltunen, Mr. Groce, Mr. Smeznik, Mrs. Spencer, Mr. Henne, Mr. Shadley, Mrs. Birkenhauer, Mr. Prather, Mr. Quast, Mr. Hilgendorf, Mr. Harbaugh, Mr. Wickerham, Madame Cline, Mrs. McClelland, Mrs. Byard, Miss Clark.

For me to effortlessly list school staff, some back nearly 42 years ago, speaks to the impact that educators have on our young people. Growing up, these people were the strongest influences in my life outside of my immediate family. Reminder: All school staff matter and impact the lives of students at NBAS. Their hard work is remembered long after they are gone.

My best memories as an athletic director here are ones when coaches, student-athletes, and parents get misty-eyed, overwhelmed with joy. Championships are awesome, but sometimes, a kid who hasn't been talented athletically enough to play a lot does something extraordinary when given an opportunity. When I see a coach, teammate, and/or parent moved emotionally, out of happiness for someone that they care about it is priceless to me. Just as rewarding for me as the titles. It has happened a number of times within the last few years.

What do you enjoy most about the North Branch community?

I enjoy working with straight-talking, authentic, hard-working families. For me, working outside of NB for 20 years and being forced to deal with manipulators, the office politics, the community politics, schmoozers, and all of the theatrics in other communities was exhausting. In North Branch our people are working so hard each day that there is little time for drama. We all are working together for our students, district, and community. Being an alum also makes my work twice as rewarding.

Here is what his co-workers had to say...

- Al promotes all sports and activities with the same enthusiasm. He goes out of his way to make sure that coaches understand expectations, feel supported, and have the tools they need to be successful. Furthermore, while Al's sphere of influence begins for many sports as they enter 7th grade, he has been more than accommodating for our youth programs for North Branch students. This is a tremendous amount of extra work for Al, awhile not technically being his job. He always affords and encourages programs to get kids involved early on, and serves constant reminders that these programs may be some

kids' only positive interactions inside of a school. Al can often be found making a positive influence on our students from sun up until sun down, as he is always in the corner of some gym!

- Al puts in so many hours for our district. He is here day and night, and normally with a smile and friendly greeting. He is an incredibly dedicated individual to our district. He is not simply the man in charge. I have seen him physically set up for an event, no matter what is needed. From filling ice buckets, setting up chairs, moving things around, being a DJ, jumping in wherever needed. He truly thinks about the little details, and takes so much pride in making sure that North Branch is viewed highly by all who visit. From other schools' athletes, coaches, parents, and officials. The name North Branch Broncos means something to him. It is not just his job. He listens to any concerns/suggestions brought to him with an open ear and mind. And has been an amazing boss as well. He is understanding and helpful. And is the true definition of "Teamwork makes the dream work." He jumps in to any role needed in our school day as well. You can tell from the students' interactions with him that they value his knowledge as well. Not just about athletics, but in general studies even. His past students are heard making comments about the things that he taught them, and how he is a great teacher and role model. One of my own children included. As a parent, even before I knew who he was, I respected Al. The stories my child brought home from his classroom when my now senior was a freshman, were encouraging. He was helpful to his students in the classroom, while maintaining a healthy learning environment. He taught them things in ways that the knowledge is retained in a subject that sometimes gets lost on the younger generations. You can tell just from witnessing his interactions with students in our building, that he genuinely cares about the kids. They are not just a number to him. Al embraces our "All In" ideology as an administrator, teacher, co-worker, and all-around human.

We are thankful for your companionship in the ongoing pursuit of competitive excellence and helping shape and grow our student-athletes. We truly appreciate all you do for our students. Thank you for being such a valuable part of our team.