

Van Buren School District

2221 Pointer Trail East

Van Buren, AR 72956

Phone: 479.474.7942

Website: www.VBSD.us



Media Release

Four alumni to be inducted into VBHS Hall of Honor

VAN BUREN, AR (June 22, 2026) The Van Buren School District is pleased to announce the induction of four alumni into the Van Buren High School (VBHS) Hall of Honor. Honorees include Crawford County Adult Education Director Dr. Debbie Faubus Kendrick; Grammy Award-winning country music artist Shay Mooney; former All-State Pointer athlete Tommy Poole, Jr.; and longtime VBSD Board of Education Member and business leader Dorvan Wiley.

Dr. Debbie Faubus Kendrick

Dr. Debbie Faubus Kendrick has devoted her life to educating and empowering others to reach their full potential. After graduating from Van Buren High School in 1976, she attended Westark Community College (now University of Arkansas – Fort Smith) and Arkansas Tech University, where she earned her degree in education. She later completed her master's at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and her Doctorate in Education at the University of Arkansas. Over the past 40 years, she has served as a classroom teacher, counselor, coach, assistant principal, and principal, before transitioning to her current role as Executive Director of the Crawford County Adult Education Center (CCAEC).

Since assuming the directorship, Faubus Kendrick has transformed adult education on a local and state level – shifting the focus from primarily GEDs to helping students obtain diplomas, degrees, and industry-endorsed certifications. She played a key role in bringing the Vincennes University Military Education Program to Crawford County. She collaborates with higher education institutions and local industries to tailor training and help participants find gainful employment in high-demand fields. She frequently partners with churches and non-profit groups to feed students and equip them with the tools they need for learning and daily life. CCAEC's alternative sentencing program works with the court system to provide educational opportunities for low-risk offenders. The initiative has proven effective at helping participants become productive citizens and saved the county millions in taxpayer dollars. CCAEC's alternative sentencing model has been recognized as "Advancing Innovation in Adult Education" by the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education.

Faubus Kendrick has served as President and Vice President of the Arkansas Association of Adult Education Administrators (AACAE) and is a member of the Van Buren Chamber of Commerce's Education and Workforce Committee. She has received numerous awards, including recognition as the AAEE District IV Teacher of the Year and the 2014 AACAE Administrator of the Year. She was named a 2022 Workforce Hero by the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals. In 2017, she was presented the prestigious Iverson Riggs Citizen of the Year Award by the Van Buren Chamber of Commerce.

A resident of Mountainburg, Kendrick lives with her husband Roy and their animals. The couple has two adult sons and three grandsons.

Shay Mooney

A 2010 Van Buren High School graduate, Shay Mooney has been a mainstay in the music industry for more than a decade as a songwriter and part of the duo Dan + Shay (with fellow artist Dan Smyers). Mooney began his musical journey as a youth singing in local churches, with the AG Choir Tour, and leading worship at summer camp. He later sang with the Christian music group Fullers Field. In 2012, he moved to Nashville to pursue his dream of songwriting and performing, where he met Smyers. Dan + Shay signed to Warner Music Nashville in 2013 and their first single, "19 You + Me," hit country radio that October. To date, 11 number one hits have followed, including "Speechless" and "Nothin' Like You."

The duo has won industry honors from the Academy of Country Music, the Country Music Association, and Billboard Music Awards, among others. Mooney and Smyers made history in 2021, when the two captured their third consecutive Grammy for "Best Country Duo/Group Performance." In 2025, they accepted the award for "Favorite Country Duo or Group" at the American Music Awards. The duo has performed on *American Idol*, and Nashville's *Grand Ole Opry*. They were also the first ever Coach-duo on *The Voice*. Most recently, the pair performed the U.S. National Anthem at the opening ceremony for the FIFA World Cup.

Philanthropy plays an important role in Mooney's life. Dan + Shay has participated in campaigns for St. Jude Children's Hospital and performed at the American Red Cross Nashville benefit concert which raised \$1 million for disaster relief efforts. He and Smyers have also helped combat homelessness through their work with Safe Haven. In 2025, Mooney headlined the Van Buren Mayor's Prayer Luncheon, which brings community members together and supports local civic groups.

Mooney is married to former Miss Arkansas USA Hannah Billingsley, with whom he shares four young sons. The couple has residences in both Nashville and Crawford County.

Tommy Poole, Jr.

A stand-out high school athlete, 1985 Van Buren graduate Tommy Poole, Jr. has been selected to the VBHS Hall of Fame for his contributions to both Pointer athletics and his community. Throughout his high school career, Poole earned numerous honors. He was three-time All-Conference and All-District in basketball and a three-year letterman in baseball. In 1985, he was also named All-Region and All-State in basketball and was recognized as the *Press-Argus* Crawford County Athlete of the Year. He received the Pointer Award, voted on by his teammates, both his junior and senior years. To date, he stands as the third-leading scorer in Van Buren Pointer basketball history.

Upon graduating VBHS, Poole attended Westark Community College to play baseball, and later Arkansas Tech University in Russellville. He double majored in business management and economics and graduated with honors. In 1990, he began his career at ABF Freight System, working as a Billing Clerk, OPS Supervisor, Linehaul Supervisor, and Linehaul Manager. Today, he serves as Director of Linehaul Operations.

Throughout his career, Poole has faithfully served his hometown community. He chartered the Boys & Girls Club of Van Buren's Alumni Association and organized its original board of directors. He presided as President for several years and helped raise more than \$65,000 in forming the group. Poole also served on the Boys & Girls Club of Van Buren's Executive Board of Directors and volunteered numerous seasons as a youth baseball and basketball coach. Poole was also a committee head for the 2004 Babe Ruth World Series in Van Buren and was selected as head coach for the host Van Buren team during the 2007 Cal Ripken World Series. He served as President of the Coleman Junior High School and Freshman Academy Basketball Booster Club for six years. Representing ABF, Poole has become an annual volunteer at United Way of Fort Smith Area's annual Touch-a-Truck event held at Van Buren High School.

Poole is also a dedicated husband, father, and grandfather. His wife Tammy was a longtime educator for the Van Buren School District. The couple has two grown children and are the proud grandparents to four grandchildren.

Dorvan Wiley

Dorvan Wiley's name is synonymous with service and leadership in Van Buren. He graduated from VBHS in 1969 and attended Ouachita Baptist University, where he played football and earned a degree in business administration. In 1974, he returned to the River Valley and began a lucrative career that spanned the manufacturing and finance industries. After initially retiring as General Manager for the Therma-Tru Corporation, he assumed the role of Interim Director for the Van Buren Chamber of Commerce. Wiley helped position the organization to hire a full-time director before he moved into a leadership role at Simmons First National Bank. In 2013, he retired as the Vice President and Market Manager for Simmons.

Throughout his career, Wiley worked diligently to better his community. He served for 23 years on the Van Buren School District Board of Education. He was also a Van Buren City Councilman for 11 years. During that time, Wiley was instrumental in creating a community recycling program that led to the eventual formation of Keep Van Buren Beautiful (KVVB). He is a longtime KVVB Board Member and Treasurer, and regularly volunteers for downtown's Earth Day festivities. He was on the Van Buren City Planning Commission in the late 1980s and from 2007-2010. Wiley is an active Lion's Club Member, as well as Past President, and helped with fundraising to establish Van Buren's newest playground, Gene Bell Park.

Wiley's other notable leadership roles have included: Van Buren Education Foundation Board; United Way Board of Directors; Boys & Girls Club of Van Buren Board Member and Past President; past VBHS Hall of Honor Committee Member; West River Valley Regional Solid Waste Management District Board Representative; Co-Chair of the River Valley Community Network; Baptist Health Hospital Advisory Board; Mercy Medical Center Board of Advisors; and Heritage Methodist Church Member, Preschool Board of Directors, and Finance Committee Chairman. Wiley has also received many accolades throughout his life, including recognition as the 1998 Iverson Riggs Citizen of the Year.

Wiley resides in Van Buren with his wife, Mikie. They are parents to five adult children and proud grandparents to ten grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Hall of Honor Ceremony

The induction ceremony for the Hall of Honor Class of 2026 will be held on **Thursday, October 1** at 6:00 p.m. in the Van Buren High School Commons. Tickets for the ceremony are \$10 and can be pre-ordered by calling 479-474-7942 or by emailing dccone@vbsd.us.

###