

For Bruff, "coaching is a calling."

When players make a mistake, he neither ridicules nor excuses them. Every struggle and every success in sports is a moment ripe for life lessons, and he is the kind of coach that does not shy away from such an opportunity. His impact, patience and encouraging spirit has helped countless children experience joy, inspiration and success through sports and teamwork. Coach Bruff is not known for state titles or unbeaten streaks. His name is not written above any stadium, field or arena. Instead, he is known for his encouraging words and tireless dedication to improvement. "Coach Bruff" is synonymous with hard work, integrity and tireless spirit.

From his coaching experiences, he has become a mentor to many of his players, sometimes beginning with something as simple as picking kids up and taking them home when they had no transportation. One child in particular, the late Damon Burnside, became a huge part of his family. Even after Damon lost the ability to see and run, much less play a sport, he and Bruff made weekly visits to local businesses and enjoyed local and regional sporting and cultural events. After Damon lost almost all of his motor functions, he and Bruff would sit and talk, laughing about anything and everything for hours. Leaving a positive impact on one child's life means more than trophies to Bruff, who brought joy to Damon's last few years of life and helped bring peace and hope to his mother, grandmother and brothers leading up to and after Damon's passing.

Coaching and mentoring young men and women is only a part of what Bruff has done and continues to do to better this community. His civic involvement and service through local clubs and organizations inspires others.

In the early 2000s and until 2008, he was elected for the at-large seat on the Union City School Board. He participated in and graduated from Obion County Leadership class and has been a member of the Union City Rotary Club for many years. Through Rotary, he and his wife, Jennifer, were chosen

as chaperones for the annual Rotary Europe trip which takes local high school students to various European sites of historical and cultural value. And again were selected as chaperones for a dozen students who traveled to Washington, D.C. Bruff also serves on the board of directors for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes in Obion County.

Further, he worked tirelessly with others to resurrect and promote the Union City Greyhounds, a baseball team that recently played in a regional league for several years.

Faith and fellowship take a central stage in Bruff's life. In all things, he strives not to be just a good man but a good Christian man. He grew up in Bishop Street Church of Christ and attends Exchange Street Church of Christ, where he raised his children, Allison and Taylor. Over the years, he has found many ways to serve the congregation — teaching Sunday school classes, working on building and grounds maintenance, helping with the booth at Obion County Hometown Walk of Hope and volunteering at Reelfoot Youth Camp. His ministry extends far beyond the walls of his church and the programs of FCA.

The writer of the nomination letter said Bruff has worked hard and puts everyone's needs before his own. "He has the heart and soul of an Obion County man and the bone-deep commitment to her traditions and growth."

His "love and commitment to this community runs far deeper than just his relatives here, his property here and his businesses here. ... Obion County holds the memories of his past, present and future. It is home to all the people who have touched his life. His love for Obion County is manifest in the influence he has had on neighbors, athletes and even strangers."

A special luncheon honoring Bruff will be held at The Venue at Center Point Business Solutions, located 1413 South Home St. in Union City, on Sept. 19. Tickets to that event will be \$15 and must be purchased in advance at the Obion County Public Library.



## 27 Years of Pride

1992 — Milton Hamilton

1993 — John Tanner

1994 — Bill Burnett

1995 — Charlie Vaughn

1996 — Phillip Pinion

1997 — Hattie Lou Brown

1998 — Mike Dickerson

1999 — Dr. Bobby Williams and  
the late Barry White

2000 — Gail Latimer

2001 — Jim Rippey Jr.

2002 — Norris Cranford

2003 — Rev. James Kinsey

2004 — Robert Wood

2005 — Clay Woods

2006 — Myrtle Harton

2007 — Dan Boykin

2008 — Community businesses

2009 — Pat Wade,

Judge William Acree and

Judge Raymond Morris

2010 — Al Creswell

2011 — Judy Barker

2012 — Robert Kirkland

2013 — Bill Harrison

2014 — David Harris

2015 — Roger Williams

2016 — William H. "Bill" Latimer III

2017 — Mike Cox

2018 — Tracy Bruff



Benefitting the lives of Obion Countians

