

Tara Tansil Gentry, basketball stand-out, educator

By Karen Campbell
Press Reporter

Greenfield High School and the University of Tennessee at Martin retired the jerseys of basketball standout Tara Tansil Gentry. Such is a fitting testament to the talent, grit and stamina that saw the Greenfield native endure two separate, potentially career-ending knee injuries and go on to secure records and championships. What isn't reflected in the displayed starched uniforms is the impact that two individuals had on the player/coach/educator/wife/stepmom and soon-to-be doctorate holder.

Even a brief conversation with Tara will include at least one reference to Mae and Thomas Tansil and, if the subject is what women want and what mother may not have mentioned, a declaration that, because she was taught the value of hard work and saw evidence of it in her parents' lives, she has lacked for nothing.



Tara Tansil Gentry's parents, Thomas and Mae Tansil were her greatest influences.

Tara speaks of Mae Tansil with the kind of respect and admiration that any mother would cherish but not all are willing to put

the time into creating. To hear Tara tell it, Mae has been a reality check when it came to the tenacity required to be a champion, a

sounding board when faced with big questions and daily concerns, and a role model for the kind of parent she hopes she has been for

stepson William.

"I don't know any situation that I wasn't prepared for," she says of her parents. Describing her mother, she calls her "loving and dedicated."

"She saw every basketball game I played in my life. She went to every college game ... in New York, in Florida, in Kentucky, in Missouri," Tara reports adding that her father was a basketball official, so he wasn't able to always attend but even if it meant Mae got home at 2 a.m. and had to be at work in a few hours, she was there. "So, with my stepson, if he's playing, I'm going to be there."

And, if she can't be, like when she's attending the consumer electronics show that is a must for the technology education courses she teaches at UTM, she's texting for scores and trying to find the West-view game streaming online.

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