

THE TWO RIVER TIMES™

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PAUL CAMPANELLA

Mentoring Youth to Success

PEOPLE SAY Paul Campanella is a great guy.

But he says that is just the teacher and coach in him, acting naturally.

"I would not trade my job for anything in the world," Campanella said. "It's part of your job as a coach and teacher to mentor and follow up."

Campanella is a physical education teacher at Rumson Country Day School, a private kindergarten-to-8th grade school. He also is the athletic director and coaches football, hockey, girls basketball, along with golf, tennis and track on the intramural side.

"Kids come back to school (after graduating) just to see him," said Lori Hohenleitner, a fellow faculty member at RCDS. "He makes kids feel valued. You can never have enough adults in your life doing that."

Campanella, 57, has been at RCDS since 1999. But the route for Campanella – a lifelong Two River resident (a Rumson native, he now lives in Middletown) – was not direct.

At Montclair State University, where Campanella received a bachelor's degree in physical education and psychology, his intent was to be a teacher and received his teaching certification.

But he could not find a teaching job out of college. So, he sold securities.

"It wasn't for me," Campanella said. "I decided I wanted to be self-employed."

He fell back on the job that helped put him through college, construction work. His father, Perry, now deceased, was superintendent at Donato Construction in Eatontown and Paul worked there as a mason's helper. He credits his father and brother, Mike, now 63 and living in Rumson, with teaching him construction.

"I wanted to work for myself," said Campanella, explaining his move from the financial world to construction. "I hired journeymen masons, who actually taught me. I knew what I didn't know."

Construction, he said, was a good life, "working outdoors and getting to play golf three times a week." But, after running Campanella Construction for about 20 years, he found the job at Rumson Country Day School.

"A (teaching) job came up at Rumson Country Day School and I decided to use my college degree and work with kids," Campanella said.

He never taught before, but he said, "I always coached, worked with kids."

Also, with construction, he would hire high school kids, "some that needed a little direction."

"I knew I had it in me," Campanella said. "It's the best move I ever made. I'll tell you there are guys around here making more money, but I love my job."

"The kids and the parents appreciate your hard work and effort. With the school, I fell in love with (its) tradition."

"He's the Pied Piper – the kids will follow him anywhere and parents trust him implicitly," Hohenleitner said. "He's so kids-focused. He epitomizes that."

Over the years, Campanella has coached wrestling and football at his alma mater, Rumson-Fair Haven High School, where he had been on the football, wrestling and track teams. He also has coached Pop Warner Football in Rumson and Red Bank. And he has worked at sports camps.

Dillon Stambaugh remembers when Campanella coached him in Pop Warner football in Red Bank. "He made football fun," said Stambaugh, now a junior at Roger Williams University.

"He went to great lengths even outside of football to make sure everyone was taken care of," Stambaugh, said. "Coach Campy" drove players home from practices and games, helped players secure landscaping jobs, and cared deeply about his players. "He would do

anything for anyone."

Some of Campanella's students have gone on to play sports at the college level – at Georgetown, Lehigh, the University of North Carolina, Duke, the University of Virginia, Johns Hopkins.

"I've watched him coach," said RCDS Head Whitney C. Slade, himself a coach at the school. "I'm super-impressed with his handling of kids. He's always positive, he's constructive – he balances that well. Kids want to play for him."

Looking back at the kids he has worked with, Campanella said, "This is a corny statement: I consider them all my kids. I think a lot of teachers feel the same way."

In his private life, "Campy" and his wife,

Beth Mindnich Campanella, have four children: daughters Scotlyn, 28, of Raleigh, North Carolina, and Samantha, 24, of Highlands, and sons Brian, 27, of Highlands and Paul, 25, of Denver, Colorado.

On and off over the years, Campanella has volunteered during the summer for Horizons, RCDS' summer academic, cultural and recreational program for students from low-income families. He, along with fellow RCDS teacher-coaches Raquel Falotico and Kelly Grady, run a 3-on-3 basketball tournament in support of Horizons.

Campanella was honored at this year's tournament for his years of work as its coordinator, said Hohenleitner, Horizons' executive director.

"My parking spot is next to his," said

Hohenleitner. "There's nobody here who's earlier or later or spends more time in the building than Paul."

Campanella, who still does construction work, is looking to ramp up the company in the summer and employ kids from the area for masonry and landscaping work.

"It's giving back," Campanella said. "They could use the money, the guidance, they could use the support. (But) I don't want people to think I'm St. Paul."

"I want to make sure these kids get the same guidance I got growing up from my parents and the great coaches I was blessed with over the years," he said.

By JOSEPH SAPIA



DANNY SANCHEZ