

Longtime Marion educator to be inducted into Hall of Distinction

By Sean Douglas

Jerry Whitton is the definition of Marion born-and-bred.

He grew up in Marion. He went to high school in Marion. And then, he dedicated his life to Marion, faithfully serving students in the vocational arts for over 40 years.

For his accomplishments and his dedication to Marion High School, Whitton will be forever enshrined in the prestigious Marion Hall of Distinction.

Whitton's love for the industrial arts manifested at an early age. During his time at Marion, he worked in the printing program, originally deciding to pursue that career path after graduation.

After working for a few



Jerry Whitton

years, Whitton went to school in Michigan, earning his bachelor's degree in printing management.

However, while he was there, Whitton had a change of heart, realizing that he instead wanted to be a teacher of the industrial arts.

Upon his return to Indiana, Whitton enrolled at Ball State University, eventually earning a second bachelor's degree in education, his administrative li-

cense, and a master's degree.

After student teaching in Muncie, Whitton accepted a teaching job in Marion's vocational department, where he remained, in various roles, for the next four decades.

"I've always loved Marion," Whitton said. "My family is from here. My wife is from Marion. I was offered an opportunity to go to Boise, Idaho and work in a newspaper printing department, but I didn't follow through with that because I love Marion. I love being here, and I still do. Marion is my home, and it always has been."

Whitton began his teaching career at the old Jones Junior High School, and then transitioned to Marion

High School, where he taught in the industrial arts. He eventually went on to become the Director of the Tucker Vocational Area Career Center, located at the high school, serving in that capacity until his retirement in 2008.

"I loved the kids," Whitton said. "I loved working with kids and helping them to learn a trade [and] helping them to learn skills in different areas of industrial education. I enjoyed seeing how they could apply what they learned in their academic programs to real life, which helped them learn it better and faster. That was very rewarding to me."

Despite a culture that promotes a college education as

the pathway to success, Whitton made it his mission to ensure his students understood that vocational studies are equally as important, and did his best to help them acquire the skills and knowledge required to make a living in the trades.

"Many kids learn much better with real life things they can put their hands on," Whitton said. "That's the biggest plus of vocational education – being able to apply what you know to a real skill and then being able to apply that real skill and go get a job in that field. That's what vocational still does, even today."

In retirement, Whitton served for several years as the President of Habitat for

Humanity, and currently serves as the Executive Director of Saint James Lutheran Church, the Secretary of Kiwanis, and the Vice President of the Marion High School Alumni Association.

Now, his face will forever adorn the Marion Hall of Distinction in recognition of his accomplishments and his service to the city of Marion.

"I just feel very honored to be among a group of such great people, and great people that served in many different fields," Whitton said. "I'm humbled to be one of those people selected, and that my picture will be on the walls of Marion High School."

National Honor Society established at Taylor's Phi Alpha Theta

Taylor University's Department History, Global and Political Studies has established a campus chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, one of the nation's premier history fraternities.

"Taylor's Phi Alpha Theta chapter will enrich students' intellectual experiences by exposing them to additional speakers, readings, and community gatherings," said Dr. Ben Wetzel, Assistant Professor of History at Taylor and the faculty sponsor. "Membership in this prestigious honorary will

also assist them in gaining admittance to graduate schools and earning job interviews with employers."

Wetzel said the application for Phi Alpha Theta was accepted by the national society earlier this year and a campus visit from the society's president, which was to have taken place during the spring semester, was postponed after Taylor and nearly every other college and university throughout the United States sent their students home in response to the

COVID-19 pandemic.

"Students do not have to be history majors to become members of Phi Alpha Theta; they only need to meet a set of requirements such as 12 hours of history courses, an overall GPA of 3.0, and a history GPA of 3.1.

The student officers for the inaugural year are:

President: Jed Barber; Vice-President: Elizabeth Hammond; Secretary: Jared Smith; Treasurer: Benjamin Woolridge; Historian: Will Shroyer.

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