

# Longtime educator and coach to retire from Chippewa Valley

By Thomas Franz

October 22, 2015

CLINTON TOWNSHIP— After 35 years as an educator at Chippewa Valley High School, Jim Murphy will be retiring at the end of this year's first semester in January.

Murphy, who is often referred to as "Murph," was recognized by the Chippewa Valley Board of Education during a recent meeting to acknowledge his retirement from the district.

Murphy said that he decided during this past summer that he was going to retire, but he and school leaders are working on ways that he can still be involved with Chippewa.

"I've spent my whole adult life here, and it's helped me when things were bad, and it's been great when things were good. It's been great being around kids," Murphy said of his time at Chippewa. "I can't express enough how much it's meant to me."

During his 35 years at Chippewa, Murphy spent 15 years as an instructor in special education. That position evolved into coordinating the supportive learning department's work-study program, which he essentially created and developed.

Murphy's program helps place special-needs students with internships or jobs with local businesses to help prepare for life after high school.

Murphy also has been the school's 10th-grade class advisor for 35 years, and the school's Key Club advisor since 1994.

Murphy coached baseball at Chippewa for 27 years, 16 of which were spent as the varsity head coach. He won a pair of league and district titles.

With all of those positions, Murphy has been one of the most familiar faces in the high school for the past 35 years. Chippewa Principal Jerry Davisson said that Murphy can frequently be spotted giving high-fives to students in the hallways, and he would always greet them by saying "God bless." Murphy is also known for arriving to the school's campus at 4 a.m. each day to run several miles.

"He does a phenomenal job at it, and he's just so more than that at our school because he's so visible. He makes himself visible. Everybody knows 'Murph.' They just love him," Davisson said.

Davisson said that Chippewa will be losing a great advocate for students with special needs.

"I think the compassion that he exhibits for anybody — he is that person that goes out and roots them on, he gets them through. He's an advocate for these kids who struggle in the classroom. In the classroom, he'll work with teachers or whatever he has to do to help them be successful. Same in the workforce; he'll go out and find things for them," Davisson said.

Denise Aquino, a Chippewa Board of Education member, said that Murphy could never be replaced.

"I've seen Jim around for many years now, and I think he's the only teacher I know that I think would truly be irreplaceable. I don't mean that against any other teacher, but I see Jim in Target parking lots helping kids move baskets, I've seen him many places where he didn't need to be," Aquino said. "I think he's a really exemplary role model for young teachers and just being a person that everyone would like to emulate."

As for his memories of teaching at Chippewa, Murphy said he will remember the generosity of the students at the high school. He pointed to a recent lunchtime fundraiser that raised more than \$700 for a family who had a house fire as an example of the students' willingness to help each other.

"I think the biggest thing that has always impressed me about here is that the kids are really generous. I think people have this idea that they're not, and at any time that someone needed something, they were always giving a lot of help," Murphy said.

Murphy said that the decision to retire was not an easy one, but his desire to spend more time with his family following the recent passing of one his brothers helped put his career in perspective.

In addition to having more family time, Murphy said he hopes to continue to exercise and read regularly, and he hopes to connect with his family's heritage at some point as well.

"I'm all Irish, so Ireland is the one place I'd love to visit. If I could ever get to Ireland, I'd be a happy man."