Duane Silseth, Distinguished Alumni

Duane was born in 1944 in Britton, SD and grew up on a farm near Rutland, ND and graduated from Havana High School in 1961. Duane attended the University of North Dakota State Teachers College in Ellendale, ND from 1961-1965 where he received his teaching degree and was also a four-year letter winner in baseball.

On June 19, 1965 Duane married Pamela Johnson and together they raised their three children, Missy, Wendy and Jason.

Duane started his teaching career in Rolla, ND in 1965. Along with teaching he was the head football coach and assistant basketball coach. In 1968 he accepted the High School Principal position with the newly formed Dakota School District. In 1970 he earned his Master’s Degree from NDSU. The fall of 1970 he became the Superintendent for the Dakota School District and continued that role until 1981. During his time at Dakota he was the head football coach, which included coaching our current Governor, Doug Burgum. He became the youngest member of the North Dakota High School Activities Association, serving a four-year term, along with serving and being active in many organizations within the school and community.

From 1981-1995 Duane left education. In 1996 he found himself back in education with the Cass Valley North School district as Elementary Principal. In 1997 with consolidation of Cass Valley North and Dakota school districts into the Northern Cass School District he was the Elementary Principal until his retirement in 2006.

Duane was involved in every aspect of the school. He was very actively involved with the nature trail, the designing of all the outdoor athletic facilities, including football field, track, practice fields, baseball field which included getting a grant from the Minnesota Twins. He was a member of the Red River Valley Officials Association, officiating in football for many years and was chosen to officiate 2 Minnesota Prep Bowls at the Metrodome as well as being chosen to officiate at the Dakota Bowl in North Dakota. You could also find him sweeping floors or helping where ever he thought he could. Interacting with the students and making sure he knew each and every one of them was very important to him. Making sure the students were getting all they needed to be successful was a priority, whatever it took.

Duane passed away in December of 2013 after a courageous 2-year battle with lung cancer. He may be gone but his legacy will live on through his children, their spouses, his grandchildren and everyone that knew him.