

A principal who cares

As a student at Huntington College in the late 1970s, Jay Peters thrived in the caring, loving atmosphere he found there. Today, he's in a position to create a similar school atmosphere, believing that the next generation of students can best grow in that type of climate, too.

Jay is now in his fifth year as principal of Northwest Elementary in Huntington. He earned his bachelor's degree in elementary education at HC in 1980; today, Jay often interviews and hires HC graduates to teach the children in his school. "I'm seeing now the excellent quality of teachers coming out of Huntington and teaching in the area schools," he says. "HC can be proud. I feel proud, too, to be a part of that tradition."

After graduating from Randolph Senior High School, Jay left the family farm near Lynn, Indiana, to attend Huntington. "I came for a visit on the advice of three fellow basketball players," he says, "and fell in love with the college and the community. I arrived in 1976, and I've been here ever since."

With only 45 graduates in his high school class, a college campus could be quite intimidating. But Jay soon learned the names of most of the other students at HC, and they knew him as well. "That personal touch, that one-on-one caring, is a great aspect of Huntington College," he says. "Faculty members were very approachable and were concerned about you as a person, not just as a number."

In his career as a teacher and athletic director, and more recently as a principal, Jay often invokes memories of the role models who helped shape him at Huntington and tries to emulate their best qualities in his work.

Two individuals stand out in Jay's memory as especially influential—Kathryn Anders in the Education Department, and then-Dean of Students Kent Fishel. "Professor

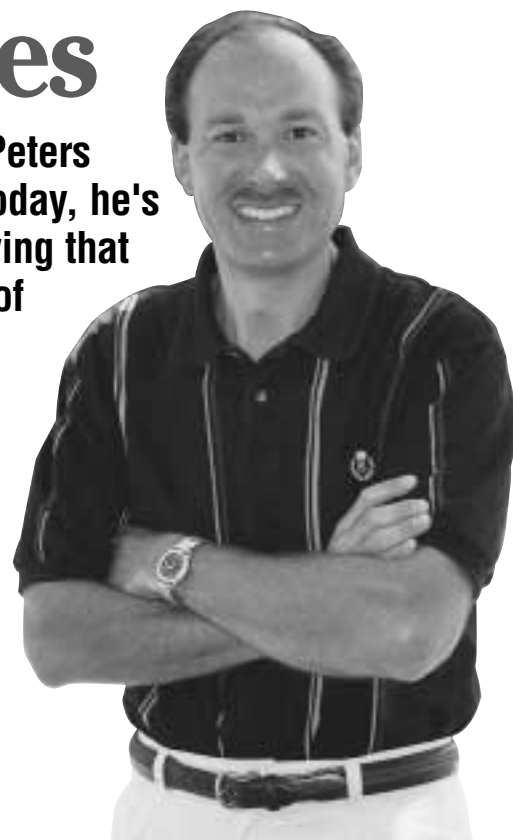
Anders took me under her wing and gave me individual guidance and help, not just about classes or education, but about life," he says. "Dean Fishel was a friend—and spiritual mentor, too. He and I would often talk about faith and pray together in his office."

While Jay cannot pray with students in his position with Huntington County Community Schools, he says the Christian virtues outlined in Colossians 4:12—kindness, humility, meekness, and patience—inform his calling as an educator.

In addition to his role as principal, each summer for the past 15 years, Jay has served as director of the popular Super Summer program, a series of three-week enrichment offerings for students in grades three through eight. This year, Super Summer involved 450 students and 35 teachers, covering such topics as sign language, radio, cooking, drama, and horseback riding.

One of the most popular Super Summer offerings is the Outdoor Discoveries class that meets at HC's Thornhill Nature Preserve (see cover story). This outdoor-education course affords students the opportunity to do all kinds of new things—make plaster casts of animal prints, engage in hands-on activities with wildlife in their natural habitat, participate in nature crafts, and assist Thornhill naturalist George Arnold with bird banding.

"It's a great area, and a great resource for our schools," Jay says of Thornhill. "We're grateful that we have the opportunity to use such a wonderful facility."



Jay's wife, Carlene, also graduated from HC (sociology, 1981) and now works at HC. After serving as a case worker for the local welfare department for several years, she now coordinates campus visits for prospective students.

Jay and Carlene have two children, Tannan, a third-grader, and Hannah, a preschooler. Jay volunteers as a board member for the local Red Cross and Junior Achievement, as a soccer and basketball coach through the YMCA, and as a Sunday School teacher for teens.

In all these activities, Jay takes to heart the motto of his church, and tries to create around him "a place where love is felt, where God is seen, and where lives are changed." ■