

## JOHN ALDRIDGE

My family moved into Rapid City after moving all over the world with the military.

I started school in Rapid City as a fifth grader and went on to graduate from Rapid City Central High School in 196. Following graduation, I attended Huron College on a football scholarship with the intention I would return to Rapid City and work for the RCAS district. My goal was achieved in the fall of 1978. My wife, Sheryl and I moved back to Rapid City where I was hired as the Physical Education teacher and Special Olympics coach at Lincoln Elementary and Garfield Elementary Schools.

My experiences coaching the Special Olympians were both rewarding and humbling. I also started a Jump Rope Demo Team while at Lincoln and Garfield, and a second team in the 2000's at Meadowbrook Elementary School that was sponsored by the American Heart Association. These groups practiced before and after school and conducted workshops for students and PE teachers along with performing at several basketball games as halftime entertainment. Both teams were very popular with the crowds and were a regular halftime show at the State Basketball Tournaments.

This was also the beginning of my coaching career for wrestling and football. I was truly blessed to begin my career working with talented coaches at the School of Mines and Technology. Coaches like Sonny Coyle, Ron Estacion, Gary Boner, Jim Thompson and John Sterner. Their guidance really helped me develop my coaching style and philosophy. In 1989 I was also hired to be an assistant football coach and work alongside Hall of Fame coaches, Lemoine Trout and Mick Wysuph.

In 1989 I was also hired as the head wrestling coach at Stevens High School, becoming the second wrestling coach at SHS following the legend, Tom Long, South Dakota's coach with more State Championships than any other at the time. Intimidating, yes, but this opportunity allowed me to cross off another goal. Head coach in my hometown. As a new head coach, I was fortunate to have longtime assistant Daryl Parker to help guide me in my first year.

During my career, I was honored to be recognized as:

- 1976 NAIA District 12 All District Football,
- 1976 Kodak Small College All American,
- Huron College Football Team of the 70's member,
- 1990 SDSU Outstanding Student Achievement Award,
- 2006 South Dakota AHPERD Elementary Teacher of The Year,
- 2012 Rapid City Officials Sports Hall of Fame,
- 2013 Rapid City Area School District Teacher of The Year,
- 2021 South Dakota Wrestling Coaches Hall of Fame.

My 37 years at SHS were very memorable and special to me. I was fortunate to work with some remarkable educators, coaches, administrators and especially the students. Stevens High School continues to lead the pack at preparing young people for their future. Throughout my career, I continuously told students that I couldn't wait to see what they did with their future and where their paths would lead. So many returned to their hometown, became solid citizens and, a

positive influence to our community. I can honestly say that I never had a bad day at work. I will always be grateful to my wife Cheryl, who consistently supported me with my goal to teach and coach and help guide young people as they pursue their future. The connections I made with students will always remain a huge part of my fondest memories. Thank you for this amazing award. **Inducted 2023**