



# Daviess County Public Schools

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## Fortney named to KTCCA Hall of Fame

Mark Fortney, who serves as boys' and girls' cross country coach at Daviess County High School, will be inducted into the Kentucky Track and Cross-Country Coaches Association Hall of Fame during a ceremony at the Clarion Hotel Conference Center in Lexington on Jan. 4.

The KTCCA reviews Hall of Fame nominations each year, including coaches, athletes, officials and other supporters of track and country-country sports. Criteria for the Coaches Hall of Fame includes a review of team accomplishments, consistency in performance by student-athletes and how athletes are trained for their specific events.

Fortney is currently in his third year of coaching the DCHS boys' cross country team and his 13th year of coaching the DCHS girls' team. Beginning with his first year of coaching at DCHS in 2007, his girls' team has won the regional championship for 13 consecutive years.

The DCHS girls' XC team placed third at the Kentucky High School Athletic Association State Championships in 2007, 2013, 2014 and 2017. They were state runner-up in 2009, 2016 and 2018; and won the State Championship in 2015. Under Fortney's leadership, the DCHS girls' team has been on the State Championship podium for the past eight seasons. In 2013, Whitney O'Bryan was the Individual Class AAA State Champion for DCHS. O'Bryan also served as assistant coach at DCHS in 2018.

Other highlights of his coaching career include leading the Muhlenberg South High School girls' cross country team to the Class AA State Championship in 2006. Suzanne Leach, a senior on that team, won the individual state championship and joined Fortney as assistant coach at DCHS in 2011. Fortney has been named All-Area Coach of the Year four times and was named KHSAA Class AAA Cross-Country Coach of the Year in 2015.

Fortney's career and love of cross country and running began as a fifth-grader at Longest Elementary School in Muhlenberg County. His physical education teacher, Debbie Woolfolk, encouraged Fortney to work toward the Presidential Award through the Physication Education Test, which required running 600 yards in less than two minutes. Fortney's time was 1:58. "That patch was like an Olympic medal at the time," Fortney recalled.

Fortney continued to run, competing for Muhlenberg Central High School, where coach Wendell Brown inspired his student-athletes on both the athletic and personal levels as his teams won regional competitions during Fortney's four years of high school, placing in the top five at the state meet several times. Individually, Fortney won the regional championship at Hillcrest Golf Course during his junior and senior years of high school in 1978 and '79.



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After graduating from high school, he joined his father in the building business and did not attend college. However, his connection to the sport remained strong through relationships with both family and friends.

Fortney's coaching career began in 1996 when Randy Swann, a former coach at Bremen High School, asked Fortney to join him in coaching elementary and middle school track and field students throughout Muhlenberg County, which he did for three years. Swann's son Devin Swann completed his high school career at DCHS as a standout athlete.

By this time, Fortney's three children were reaching high school, and he began coaching with track coach John Kirtley at Muhlenberg North High School, where Ryanne, Jillian and Jacob all participated in cross country and track. Jillian also played basketball and soccer. Ryanne and placed in the top 15 in the State XC Championships for four seasons and the top 10 for two seasons. Ryanne graduated from the University of Alabama Birmingham in 2007 and helped her father coach at DCHS before moving to Ohio. Jacob earned a state championship in cross country in 2002 and 2003, and went on to run for Eastern Kentucky University for four years.

In 2004, Coach Jerry Hancock hired Fortney to assist with his team at Muhlenberg South High School, where Fortney remained until he and his wife Debbie moved to Owensboro in June 2006. Coach Tony Rowe invited Fortney to coach the girls' cross country team after the retirement of Coach Jeff Miller – a role Fortney continues.

In reflecting on his Hall of Fame recognition and his coaching career, Fortney was quick to give credit to others. "So many people have had an influence in my running and coaching career," he said. "My biggest supporter has been my wife Debbie. She has shared in our coaching duties throughout our tenure of coaching. Without her, none of this would have been possible. Former DCHS Coach Tony Rowe has been a great mentor to me. Without Tony, I would not have gotten the Daviess County job and would most certainly not have received the Hall of Fame induction. He has been a great friend and an awesome coach to work with over the years. I have had so much support from the administration at DCHS during my tenure. Principal Matt Mason has been a great supporter of the running programs at DCHS over the past several years. Athletic director Larry Logsdon is on always on board with what we are doing with the Daviess County cross country and track and field teams. I appreciate the support they provide. Most of all, to be able to receive an award like this, you must have the athletes. I have had such an awesome group of young ladies and gentlemen who have been terrific in the classroom and have been outstanding athletes and individuals. Without each of those athletes, this induction would definitely not have been possible. I owe it all to my current and former athletes."

**Note to Media** – Our media partners are invited to attend the Hall of Fame induction ceremony in Lexington on Jan. 4. For more information, contact Kathy Johnston at [lexingtonkathy@aol.com](mailto:lexingtonkathy@aol.com) or 859-494-2509. Reservation deadline is Jan. 1. Mark Fortney is available for interviews at [mark.fortney@daviess.kyschools.us](mailto:mark.fortney@daviess.kyschools.us)

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