

In the Spotlight

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Homecoming Traditions

In this edition, we take a trip down memory lane with team members from the graduating classes of 1989, 1999 and 2009 who came back to be employed by Bastrop ISD. This issue highlights Bastrop High School graduates - James Fidler, Shirley Miller, Jon Ross and Andrew Neal.

We end this edition with this year's 2019 Homecoming from Bastrop High School and Cedar Creek High School.

Go Bears! Go Eagles! Let the homecoming traditions continue.

We hope you enjoy!
BISD Communications Team

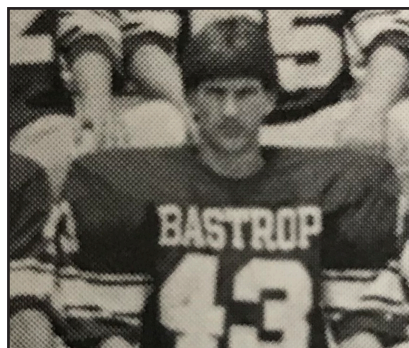
1989

Fidler finds spot under Friday night lights

Under the glow of the Friday night lights at Memorial Stadium, Coach James Fidler is in the zone.

"I'm so focused when I coach. Whether it's with kids in Pop Warner or my high school students, I am always making sure we are doing our best," Fidler said as he sat in the teacher's workroom at Cedar Creek High School.

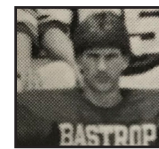
Fidler graduated from Bastrop High School in 1989, but his time in BISD



James Fidler played with the Class of 1989 at Bastrop High School. He is now an assistant coach for the Cedar Creek Eagle Football team.

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James Fidler, Class of '89



Shirley Miller, Class of '99



Jon Ross, Class of '09



Andrew Neal, Class of '09




Bastrop
Independent School District



Coach Fidler found his calling at Cedar Creek High School where he teaches math and assists with football.

began in the sixth grade when his family moved from Austin. He says those short six years were some of his best.

“I appreciate the experiences I have had in Bastrop, especially because of the athletics program. My coaches really helped me understand life and meet challenges head-on. I really enjoyed my senior year. It is high on my list as one of the best years of my life,” he said.

James says the Class of ‘89 had such an impact on the town and the school district.

“It was the first time in 12 years the team had been to the playoffs. We were dominant. We had a really awesome class, and we’re still a tight group. A lot of people talk about how they have a great graduating class, but they can’t touch the Class of 89,” he said with a smile.

In the 30 years since high school, James married, had three daughters and worked in the call center industry. However, his job wasn’t fulfilling. He recognized that his senior year of high school was among his best because he was playing the sport he loved and had coaches who were invested in making him and his team better.

“The coaches helped make me a better person, and they turned a lot of young boys into really great men. I have respect for that. I realized it was what I wanted to do, to help inspire students through teaching and sports.”

Fidler knew then that he had some decisions to make. His wife Carrie urged him on and motivated him to make a change in professions, but there would be a few steps he had to take first. Finishing college was one of them. He enrolled at Texas State University, graduated in 2013, and accepted his first teaching job with Elgin ISD, albeit without a coaching slot. A year later, a call from a fellow Class of 89’ alumni would help make his dream a reality.

“I graduated with Coach [Jon] Edwards, and when he got the [head coaching] job at Cedar Creek High School, he called and made me an offer to join him. I’m now an Assistant Coach for the Eagle football team. Coaching and teaching math is going great. I’m getting a lot of fulfillment out of it. I have such deep respect for this profession,” Fidler said.

Fidler has been at Cedar Creek High School for the past five years. “I never expected to be a teacher. That’s what I tell my athletes and students. You never know where you’re going to be in 10 years. The lists you have in your mind...you may take a detour,” he said.

A key component to James’ teaching and coaching style is effort. Do the work, practice, and be prepared.



Coach Fidler is pictured with family, Hannah Fidler; wife Carrie Fidler; Samantha Fidler. Not pictured Emily Page.

“In my math classes, I tell students that it’s not getting it right or wrong that’s most important. Did you try? If you try and show me your work, I can help you find where you made the mistake. It’s the same thing when I’m coaching. One thing correlates to the other. If you don’t do a good job here, then you’re going to have that same attitude when you’re at a job. It’s important to work hard, show some effort and take pride in what you do,” he said.

When James sees a student finally solving a math equation he or she was struggling with or an athlete overcoming some obstacle on the field, he takes pride knowing he’s done his job.

“I thoroughly enjoy what I do. I’m glad to be back home helping the next generation, even though I still can’t believe it’s been 30 years since I graduated high school. I look at the time and say my goodness! It really seems like it wasn’t that long ago, but then my body reminds me it was,” he said with a laugh.

“Time really does fly when you’re having fun!”



The 1989 Homecoming Court for Bastrop High School. Sonta Henderson was named the Homecoming Queen.

Miller fulfills passion for teaching

Shirley (Moore) Miller looks back on her time at Bastrop High School with heartfelt memories. Her favorite group, Barenaked Ladies, was in heavy rotation on Top 40 radio stations. She could still watch her favorite film *Pretty Woman* on a VCR, and when she graduated in May 1999, the uncertainty of Y2K was still months away. In short, life was good.

“When I look back, I have many fond memories. Just good times. Two of my favorite things were softball and art. I loved playing softball and traveling to games with friends. Art was great because I could be in the



Shirley (Moore) Miller teaches at Bluebonnet Elementary.

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moment. It would be quiet, and I could just create,” Miller said.

Voted Most Artistic, Miller was looking forward to taking art classes at Concordia University in Austin and starting that phase of her life.

“I was really looking forward to college. I wanted to be an artist. I was excited to take art classes in college. I thought my career would be in marketing or advertising using art, but then when I took an art class I realized art was more of a hobby for me.”

Faced with a decision of what she should do with her life, Miller knew she wanted to do something she could be passionate about, which is what led her to teaching.

“I remember growing up in Bastrop ISD. I started at Mina, then Emile. I remember having such incredible teachers. My favorite teacher was my second grade teacher, Mrs. Landrum. She inspired me to read. She would read to our class all the time. I really enjoy reading because of her. The way she told a story was really great,” Miller said.

Touched by that memory and driven by the ambition to pay it forward, Shirley found her new calling.

“I did my student teaching at Cedar Creek Elementary and fell in love with the job. I knew I wanted to teach third grade. I remember saying to myself, ‘I never want to teach kindergarten,’ but one day I had to teach a kindergarten class as part of my school assignment and I loved it!” she said.

Once she graduated from college, Miller knew her destination.

“Oh, I wanted to teach in Bastrop. It felt like home here. I’ve always loved Bastrop. I have such fond memories of the teachers I had here, and Bastrop ISD is a special place.”

She was hired and spent her first year teaching at Cedar Creek Elementary. When Bluebonnet Elementary opened up, Miller came on board as a kindergarten teacher and hasn’t looked back.

“Kindergarten students really enjoy simple things. They have positive attitudes and real joy when they’re learning. They absorb so much,” she said.

Though one part of the job that, even after 17 years, is still hard to absorb is working alongside teachers Miller had in school.

“I work with a few teachers who I had in school. They are still here and it’s different, but in a good way. I have so much respect for them. I now understand the struggles they had as teachers. It really gives you a new perspective,” she said.

Looking at her career through different lenses, Miller embraces each day. She starts with a blank canvas and hopes to make an impact and add some color to a student’s life.

“I have a lot of good memories with my students. It’s amazing to see what they can accomplish and how much of an impact you have on who they become. I taught a student 17 years ago in kindergarten and in first grade. I was also his mentor. Well, he’s older now, graduated and he recently found me on Facebook and told me how big of an influence I was to him and how much he appreciated his time in my class. That’s special when you teach someone and they remember. I really enjoy planting the seeds and seeing kids improve in reading and learning,” she said.

Miller’s students get a thrill when they learn that she also went to school in BISD. Outside her classroom door is her kindergarten class picture. She’s in the center wearing a plaid skirt with a purple and pink



Shirley Moore was named Most Artistic of her senior class in 1999, along with fellow classmate, Casey Bartsch.

sweater. The picture is in a frame that says "Ms. Miller, loving school since kindergarten". Six words she believes and expresses every day.

"I love my job! I can't imagine doing anything else. It's great that I get to teach in Bastrop. When I was in school the teachers always did their jobs and they still do. Bastrop ISD is a great learning environment. I wouldn't want to be anywhere else," Miller said.



1999 Homecoming Court included (l-r) Barbara Vinton, Shanda Galvan, Kelly Borsheim, Jennifer Nutt, Carrie Mendez, Rachel Offineer, Lorena Liendo, Susie Trigg, Julie Wardell, Brandi Perkins and Kristin Pinkson.



Buck Bailey was named the 1999 Homecoming King for Bastrop High School.

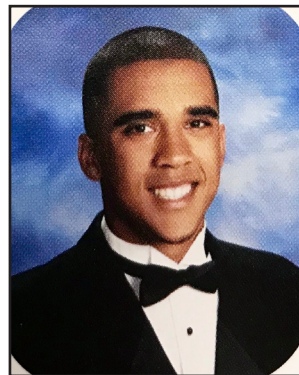
Ross finds dream job with BISD

When he talks about growing up in Bastrop and attending school in BISD, Coach Jon Ross tells the story with an enthusiastic smile. And why not? He had a storied high school career. He was a top student, a successful athlete, and Homecoming King his senior year.

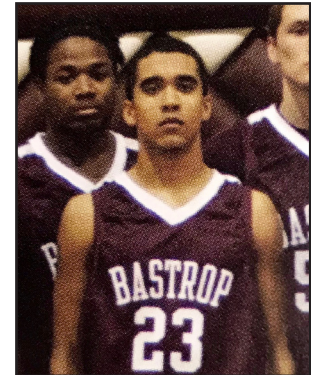
"I remember Homecoming. I did not put my name on the ballot, but I was humbled that people voted for me anyway," adding that Homecoming is an important tradition, "It's like a pre-graduation. It's one of the first big events of senior year so it's important."

Ross graduated from Bastrop High School in 2009. In the ten years since, he's played college football at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, married Megan, started a family, and now teaches and coaches football.

"My first dream was to be a professional athlete, but when I found out that was going to be a longer route



Jon Ross graduated from Bastrop High School in 1999 and was named the Most Athletic senior boy.



for me than I had planned, I decided to get into teaching and coaching," Ross said.

Ross started his career in Smithville then spent just a year in Elgin before a teaching/coaching position opened up at Bastrop High School. Returning to his alma mater was a great decision. Today, Ross says he's grateful to have the best of both worlds. He spends his days at Bastrop High School as a co-teacher in chemistry and spends his afternoons on the gridiron with the Bastrop Bears football team coaching wide

2009

receivers.

"This is my dream job! I'm lucky to be able to be here," he said.

As a teacher and coach, Ross' goal is to help his students find their inner strength, tap into their talents, and be successful.

"I like to think of myself as a positive and understanding educator. Caring. Motivational. Building that relationship is crucial in teaching. Students will trust you. I want to help them focus on becoming productive people in society. It's important whether you learn it in the classroom or on the field. The experiences and lessons that I learned from going to school in Bastrop ISD all played a role in making me the person and educator I am today," he said.

It's only been ten years since Jon Ross graduated high school, so

it's no surprise some of the teachers who played an important

role in shaping Ross as a student are now his colleagues.

"This is my dream job! I'm lucky to be able to be here," Ross said.

"Ms. [Amanda] Hudspeth was my math teacher. She was very patient and helpful. There were times I never thought I was going to make it through math, but Ms. Hudspeth really helped me.

Mr. [John] Gosselink was actually my senior AP English teacher and now he's the principal. Coach (Steven) Mayberry was my coach in high school. It's definitely weird in a way. I can't call them by their first name ever. There's a respect factor that they showed me when I was a student, and I want to show my students that even though I am now colleagues with these people, I still don't call them by their first name," he said.

Ross believes respecting yourself and others is crucial to building character, learning how to relate to others, and coping with challenges.

"You can have negative things happen, but if you choose to keep fighting, if you choose to put one foot in front of the other, you're going to be alright. It's sink or swim. If you can swim, tread water. If you can tread water, then float. But don't give up. And you know, that's what makes this school district a great place. Everyone deserves an opportunity and our district is providing that," he said.

Coach Ross summed it up when he said, "We are all in this together!"



Jon Ross graduated from Bastrop High School in 1999 and returned to teach and coach at his alma mater.



*Above - 2009 Homecoming Queen and King were Brittany Meuhr and Jon Ross.
Left - 2009 Homecoming Court*

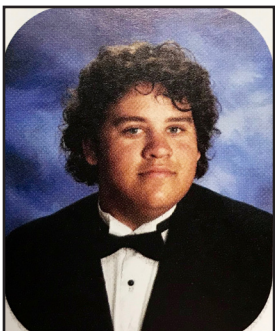
Neal continues BISD tradition

It's fair to say Bastrop ISD is in Andrew Neal's DNA given that he attended school here from kindergarten through grade 12 and now works in the Information Technology department. He started at Emile, then went to Bastrop Intermediate, Bastrop Middle, and finally Bastrop High School where he graduated in 2009.

"My experiences in the school district were good. I learned a lot of social skills and educational skills. The staff was very important to me. My family was involved in PTA so I knew a lot of the teachers and staff. I graduated with some of their kids. Some of the staff were like second parents to me. That made school more comfortable," Neal said.

Two teachers who made a big impression on him were at Emile Elementary. Neal says the recently retired Shannon Boatright was a superb teacher who really invested in her students. Music teacher Deanna Bodine also made a big impression.

"I really enjoy music. She helped me to understand that. When I got older and was able to join my school band, I did. I played the trumpet and really enjoyed it. One of my favorite school memories was on a band trip to Disney. It was my freshman year. Being with people who have the same interests as you made the trip really good. It was a great time to make friends. I remember during Homecoming the band put on a great performance. There was already so much school spirit and our music just made it better," he said.



Andrew Neal
Class of 2009

Once high school ended, Andrew attended classes at Austin Community College and then UT Austin. He wanted to major in computer science. While he was still going to school, a job opened up in the IT department, and Neal applied.

"I didn't think I would end up working at Bastrop ISD, but

2009



Andrew Neal is a product of Bastrop ISD, attending kindergarten through twelfth grade. Neal returned to BISD and currently works in the Information Technology department.

when a spot opened up in technology I took the opportunity. I had to learn about higher levels of computer science and software. It's been great," he said.

The opportunity to work at BISD has allowed him to work alongside people who helped shape who he is today. "I'm able to relate to them more, but it can feel strange to be their colleague. Still, they know I am here to help them. While some former students may send emails or updates every now and then to their teachers, I am working with my former teachers so they can see a direct result of their work and effort--what they taught me and how it's being put to use every day."

A member of the top ten percent of his class and the National Honor Society, Andrew credits his years in school with showing him that hard work pays off and that life can have detours as well. He believes the solution to navigating through challenges is staying focused and being an authentic person.

"BISD was my practice run at life. When I think about it, it really was. You have all these different groups, and we learned to interact with each other. We learned to work with each other. We learned to work in groups where if one person fails, the group fails. My time here taught me a lot about responsibility and about why it's important to be a good person. I learned a lot academically and about life."

And that's what it's all about.



Above- Cedar Creek High School 2019 Homecoming Court

Right - 2019 Cedar Creek High School King & Queen - Alfred Collins and Itzel Aguilar



Above - Bastrop High School 2019 Homecoming Court

Right- 2019 Bastrop High School King & Queen - Nathan Blair and Paulina Valencia Avalos



Bastrop ISD Communications Office
906 Farm Street
Bastrop, TX 78602
www.bisdtx.org • 512-772-7100