

*by: Chris Moody, VAS Contributor*

Sheri Fullen has a deep appreciation of the benefits of sports. That's what set off a light bulb in her mind when she learned about the mission of Virginia Amateur Sports.

Working in management at Carter Bank and Trust, Fullen was part of a meeting with Pete Lampman and Dan Foutz during the change-over in leadership when Lampman was retiring as VAS president and Foutz was coming onboard.

"I learned about Virginia Amateur Sports and I really liked what they were doing," Fullen said. "I know first-hand the positive impact sports can have and the difference competition can make in a person's life."

That direct knowledge came as a youth growing up in her hometown of Hinton, W. Va.

"Basketball and organized sports really saved my life," Fullen said. "In the black community, in a small town in West Virginia there were not a lot of opportunities. But there were a lot of opportunities to get in trouble."

She had plenty of chances to go down a bad road, but there was a special coach, Mr. Wayne Ryan, who cared enough to be more than a teacher of a sport, he as a guiding force in her life.

"I had the support of a coach who really cared about me. He was like a second dad," Fullen says, comparing the bond of a team to that of a family.

"My team was a family, too. Being an athlete is a community into itself, within the school. Your name is in the paper every week and there's some integrity with that," Fullen said.

The expectation and pride that come with being on a team were important. Playing the sport, learning its basics, practicing and persevering when challenges arose were all important lessons that carry into life.

"It was being proud to be part of something bigger than yourself. We would dress up when we went places to show our pride in ourselves. It kept me out of trouble that was right there," she said.

Having chosen a straighter path that avoided trouble, Fullen went to work after high school as a 911 dispatcher. After many years in emergency services, she switched call centers, entering the banking industry. Once there she was promoted into branch management and eventually found herself learning more about one of her bank's clients, VAS. Fullen knew she wanted to help the organization.

In 2019 Fullen joined the board. She is now the secretary of the board and serves on the executive and finance committees.

Fullen said that she's the person who will say what everyone is thinking, something organizations need in the boardroom.

Along with her husband of 27 years, Phillip, she raised two sons.

All that might be enough to keep most people busy, but Fullen managed to find time to be part of a band. Originally a member of the secular rock band Soul Revolt, Fullen now plays in a Christian band called ECB. That stands for Exalted Christian Band, but the branding is simply ECB. The message is clear that Fullen and her band mates are people of strong faith.

VAS and its mission combine her love of sports – the values and lessons as much as the competition – with her faith, making it an organization she serves with a passion.