

A 38 year veteran of Tallulah Falls School, Mike Dale has served as a cross country coach, track & field coach, athletic director, dorm counselor, director of information services, dean of students, boarding director, director of giving, and Tallulah Gallery director.

Mike Dale was synonymous with GREAT leadership, service, and an All In mentality. His versatility in ability, desire to produce excellence, and positive demeanor endeared him to students, athletes, and staff alike.

Coach Dale resurrected the XC and T&F programs in 1984 after a TFS interscholastic athletic hiatus and continued guiding the program through 1997. In 1990 his male harriers won the only Region Championship in school history and placed fifth at the State Championship - also highest in school history. Mike was honored as the 1990 Georgia Athletic Coaches Association Region 8A Boys Cross Country Coach of the Year.

Coach Dale's proteges included numerous individual state qualifiers and several individual state medalists and champions in cross country and track & field. He emphasized, "as a coach I loved nothing better than a surprise positive result. Any time something pleasantly unexpected happened. Of course I was happy when good athletes performed up to their potential. But when any athlete regardless of ability far exceeded my expectations, and their own, that made me truly happy. The greatest reward one gets from coaching is daily interaction with students to achieve common goals. Students are incredibly insightful and I think I learned as much from them as they learned from me."

Commenting on the impact TFS has on past generations, he continued, "When I was coaching, Tallulah Falls School was very small, with barely 100 high school students enrolled. We always competed against larger schools. We were always the underdogs. We were always outnumbered. These obstacles became tremendous motivators. I challenged each athlete to be the best he or she could be, not just in athletics but in the classroom and in life. Many of these students have gone on to be highly successful adults. They learned early on that anything worth accomplishing is achieved through hard work and determined persistence. That is the lesson and the legacy of their years at TFS."

After an interesting turn of events, Mike basically took on the athletic director role for free. He was known for his support of both coach and athlete, always available to listen, assist and encourage, and promote our Indians. He let the coaches coach while supporting them at every opportunity,

Mike's generosity extends beyond TFS. He supports the St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, American Red Cross, and Make-A-Wish Foundation, all important endeavors close to his heart.

Mike Dale was instrumental in the advancement of TFS athletics at a time when the Indians went from intramural and recreational play to having the opportunity for competition to be a motivating influence upon skill, team, and school wide development.

Mike summarized, "I spent more than half of my life, and most of my adult life, at Tallulah Falls School. TFS will always hold a special place in my heart. This honor is a nice tangible acknowledgment of my efforts. I cherish any small part I may have played in the evolution of TFS Athletics." Mike retired from TFS in 2016.

Former volleyball coach and long time TFS educator Cyndy Campbell said of Mike, "Mike Dale is truly a legend at TFS. Not only for his dedication to athletics but he has had a tremendous influence on our students in the dorm, business office, work program and during his free time while employed at the school. I know Mike as a happy, fun, helpful, organized, well liked, loving, great guy who is always smiling and a joy to work with. I have never heard Mike Dale say anything negative about our school or anyone who works here. He always made me smile and feel good especially when we had to hang hundreds of stockings in the lobby of the Circle Building for all the children at Christmas time! Many alumni come back to campus to visit and one of the first things they ask is, "Is Mr. Dale still here"? He has made a lasting impression on students and staff and I miss him very much!"

Present Dean of Students and Director of Boarding Jimmy Franklin commented, "I had the pleasure of working with Mike Dale for 34 years. Mike exemplified a passion of caring about students, encouraging students to do their best in the classroom, during extracurricular activities, and for many years on the school's work program. Mike's positive outlook and attitude made him one who focused on the goodness in people and situations rather than the negative. He brought a sense of joy and compassion to his leadership in the dormitories, track and field and cross country events, and to his coverage through the Advancement Department. Mike is a gifted writer and captured many significant TFS student life events and experiences through his publications and photos. Mike even made it possible for me to coach the "sport" of "bowling". Mike would cover for me in the dormitory on Tuesday nights so that I could take a group of students bowling at Rose Lanes in Toccoa. I'm happy that Mike is being recognized for his years of service as a coach and leader at Tallulah Falls School. For years he has been sought out by our graduates for the significant role he played during their school years. Congratulations Mike!!"

Present athletic director Scott Neal praised Mr. Dale's contributions to the life of the school in saying, "Mike Dale was the athletic director when I came to TFS in 1999. He instantly welcomed me into the TFS family, supported me in every endeavor, and continued to be a light in the mountains exemplary role model in each area he was asked to lead. He was a consistent force of reason, an influential balance of competitiveness and life skills, a man of his word whose excellence and honesty still resides with me today. Mike was both talented and engaged. His saw a need and met it. He also was a role model for taking on projects that others either didn't want or were not equipped for, and for leading that project to excellence and growth."