

**VOICE**

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Many of the children that he umpired or coached are grown now, but rest assured they all remember his jolly laugh and his interest in each one of them.

Mendenhall first began coaching flag football years ago. "Maybe that is why I am half crazy," Mendenhall said with a laugh.

"It was the pee-wee age and, wow, that takes patience but it was fun."

Mendenhall didn't shy away from rambunctious children when he married and became a parent to Nick, who is 25 and Holly, age 17. He also coached organized football at Willis for two years and helped coach boy's varsity football at Buckeye Valley High School for four years.

Mendenhall also was instrumental in helping Dick Sanfillippo organize middle school wrestling in 1984-85 at Willis. The program continues to flourish today.

"We had some kids that needed guidance. Bubba was not only a coach but a counselor. He helped direct the kids in the right direction. He's a great guy and we were so good back in those days," Sanfillippo said.

It was then on to working for the Delaware Parks and Recreation where he umpired girls softball for many years and also coached girl's summer softball and basketball.

Chrissy Tate, of Delaware, who is grown and a mother now, reminisced about days past when she played softball and basketball for Mendenhall. She couldn't talk without laughing as she recalled so many wonderful summer days.

"We loved Bubba. We all wouldn't play for anyone else. He pushed us but never got mad. I never saw him be angry even when we messed up. We won a lot of games, too," Tate said.

"He helped me a lot. I was going through some tough times then and he told me to stay in school and keep playing sports. He wasn't just a coach, he was my friend."

For many months he tried to ignore the shortness of breath he was experiencing. He had a constant sore throat, coughed constantly and had a hard time swallowing. When he finally went to the doctor, his windpipe was blocked so badly that an immediate tracheotomy was done.

On May 9, Mendenhall was wheeled into surgery to face the unknown when he was told by the surgeon that he might have to have his larynx removed also. Instead of being afraid of losing his voice permanently, Mendenhall found the positive and just wanted the cancer out of him so he could move on to the next step of treatment which would be 35 rounds of radiation that lasted seven weeks.

"Nick has been my support team in so many ways," Mendenhall said as tears welled up.

"I remember on the fifth week when Nick was taking me daily for my treatments, I told him, 'I can't do this anymore. I want to quit.'"

Mendenhall was burned badly from the radiation and he quit for a week and knew he had to finish what he had started.

And he did. After his treatments were completed in September, due to his diet consisting only of health drinks, Mendenhall lost about 50 pounds. It was time for him to move on to the next step and time to be heard.

"I couldn't talk for four and a half months and had to write everything down. I am sure there are some people out there that were glad I couldn't talk," Mendenhall jokingly said.

"I remember my wife Kris telling me that now she gets the last word — I quickly wrote on a pad of paper, 'Oh no, you don't,'" he said.

Mendenhall was so eager to talk again that when he was given a voice prosthesis placement unit, he didn't even have to be trained on using it. He taught himself.

"And I haven't shut up," he said. "I have a battery pack and extra batteries to run my mouth."

Nick continues to help but it hasn't been an easy road. Mendenhall had to take an early retirement from Genco Whirlpool and his income has been cut considerably as he waits for assistance and continues to heal. He has hope that his sense of smell will come back which is also a contributor for his lack of appetite.

But each day he cooks up something in his modest, simple kitchen. He sits down in his tidy, small apartment, and finds reasons to be grateful and blessed.

"I forgot what my voice sounded like. I know I hollered a lot." He listened to an old home video and hearing his original voice was not too upsetting.

Nick said, "See, Pops does have a voice."

"People know me and we all know I've made some big mistakes in life. I have had a lot of time to think. I love my little apartment and just enjoy staying home. I've learned to appreciate reading and I'm focusing on a cleaner life now. Each day, I thank God that I am alive and each night before I go to bed, I give thanks for another day," Mendenhall said.

He admits to having gloomy days but firmly says, "I am not a quitter and I can't wait until the next Relay for Life."

In January, he will be going back in for an extensive check up. "There's a spot they are concerned about but I have inspiration. I saw people at the James Cancer that were far worse than me. I want to help others like so many have helped me. Kara Peters, a human resource specialist at Whirlpool helped me so much. I have friends all over the United States that have been here for me. I want to visit cancer clinics and help others. Maybe I'll be a motivational speaker."

Mendenhall can and will be heard. He's thinner, his voice is different and he hasn't regained all his strength but he has a message for all those children he has always enjoyed.

"I want to talk to them about not smoking and making right choices," he said.

With his optimistic attitude, 2009 looks good for Mendenhall as he talked about his future. "I'm going to be strong, not give up and keep laughing."

People are drawn to Mendenhall's magnetic personality and they will listen. He does have a voice again and he is loved by many.

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**CENTER**

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The project's expected costs also include \$3 million in renovations, said Bob Morgan, superintendent of the board. It would have cost upwards of \$10 million to build a new center from scratch, he said.

"The building needs a little work, but I think we're getting a good deal for what you're paying," Commissioner Kris Jordan said.

Morgan said the center would be closer to the majority of people who use the board's services, who mostly live in the southern portion of the county.

Demand for the board's services has increased by 75 percent over the past five years, according to Morgan.

Commissioner Jim Ward voted against the purchase citing concern that the property is owned by the husband of a former county commissioner.

"For the county to turn around and bail out another former commissioner, it wouldn't be right," Ward said.

The building was purchased from 7991 Columbus Pike LLC, a subsidiary of a RealAssist, Inc., a company run by Stephen Martin, a Delaware city attorney and former commissioner Debbie Martin's husband. Martin remains a member of the Delaware County Republican Party's Central Committee.

Property records show Martin's company paid \$2.7 million to purchase the 21,754 square-foot building in 2000, and would apparently be selling it at loss to the county. The owner of the building paid \$59,952.42 in property taxes in 2007, county records show.

Morgan said he picked the house because of its location and didn't know Martin owned it until further along in the process.

Efforts to seek comment from Martin were unsuccessful as of press time.

The building's plans still need to be approved by Orange Township zoning authorities, but the project is expected to be complete by December, 2010.

In other business, the commissioners agreed to buy \$2.4 million worth of sewer taps from the Concord/Scioto Community Authority.

The CA needs to sell sewer taps, which refers to the fee paid to tap into a sewer system, to cover its payments for the construction of a \$30 million wastewater treatment plant in Concord Township.

The CA needed to sell 241 taps by the end of the year in order to meet its payments to the county. To date, it has sold only 28.25.

The county will pay the money through 2009 and 2010 for the rights to the sewer taps, a term that refers to the fee a landholder pays to tap into the county's sewer system.

The county paid about \$4,500 for each tap, and could sell them at a good profit for \$5,900 each, Cannon said.

Commissioner Kris Jordan said the purchase was a good long-term investment for the county.

"It's a good business deal," Jordan said.

The commissioners on Monday also:

- Approved 3-0 a contract with L. Robert Kimball & Associates for consulting services at the county 911 center.

Kimball will assess the county's 911 operations, said 911 board president and Delaware City Manager Tom Homan.

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**GIFT**

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It all began around Labor Day, in early September, when those athletes interested in trying out for the Hayes basketball team began their pre-conditioning. And it all came to a climax on Election Day when Dayonne Johnson, who just recently turned 18, had his heart attack on the track at the school.

Larry Eberst has coached for 31 years, 15 of them in basketball at Hayes. While he has seen his share of injuries over the years, what happened on Nov. 4 was "definitely the first time it ever happened in my career."

Conditioning over the past couple months had included lifting four days a week at 6 a.m., three days of running and two days of open gym.

"It is a commitment and he (Dayonne) made that commitment," Eberst said. "His grades were improved and he was heading in the right direction. Then this happened."

The athletes were just finishing conditioning that day before going inside for open gym. Tryouts for the team would be the following week. Eberst said he had actually started to taper off on the practices.

"It was not real rigorous. Actually a pretty easy workout," he said.

The coach said that Dayonne had been having some stiff back problems since the beginning of practices in early September. This particular day, he had fallen back some during a run on the track and was holding his back, but it was a normal sight to see. After the run, Dayonne laid down on the track and assistant coach Jordan Blackburn went over to help him stretch out.

Blackburn then called Eberst over where Dayonne appeared to be having a seizure. Eberst said 911 was called, two athletes were sent to direct the squad and the rest of the athletes were sent to the other side of the track.

After about a minute of seizures, Eberst said he observed that Dayonne had quit breathing and had no pulse. He immediately began CPR on the young athlete.

"It was a no-brainer," he said. Eberst performed CPR for about four minutes until the squad came. The medics then had to defibrillate Dayonne four times while he laid on the track.

"They were incredible," Eberst said. After stabilizing Dayonne, the squad transported him to Grady Memorial Hospital.

"My car was right on their bumper," Eberst said.

Grady was waiting for the squad as was Dayonne's family, who Blackburn had already contacted. Dayonne was then life-flighted to Children's Hospital in Columbus.

"It was a tense situation," Eberst said. "We all went to Children's."

The coach finally left after Dayonne was stabilized.

After tests at Children's, the problem was narrowed down. Dayonne had an artery at the back of the heart that was in the wrong place.

Born with the condition, they operated, moved the artery and now expect a full recovery. Katina Johnson said what happened was a total surprise. Dayonne had not been ill previously, and the family was totally unaware of his heart condition.

"The outcome was great," she said. "He's doing good, doing great."

Yet even with the open-heart surgery, Johnson said surgeons could not guarantee that Dayonne would not have another incident. So he had a cardioverter-defibrillator implanted in case of another incident.

Eberst said that the heart attack could have happened anywhere at anytime, and was told that it was a good thing it happened where and when it did.

"You know people, the doctors, paramedics, say I am a hero and what I did was unbelievable. I say it was being responsible. It's what coaches are supposed to do," Eberst said. To him, the success story is Dayonne — a senior who never played on the team before and made the commitment to try.

Johnson said she is thankful for the coaches.

"I was surprised (Dayonne) went out for basketball but being as it's his last year, he wanted to go out and play," she said. "And I'm glad of the outcome. That's our Christmas. We may not have it financially, but I have my son."

And Dayonne? "I actually have a lot of strength and energy," Dayonne said, adding, "I thought only old people had heart attacks."

He said remembers the coach visiting him once in the hospital, but was told that Eberst was a frequent visitor.

Dayonne said the entire situation has been kind of strange.

"I thank everybody for supporting me and raising money for me," he said.

"Coaches deal with stressful situations a lot," Eberst said. He said while those situations may not all be life-threatening, in games coaches need to make split-second decisions.

Once a year, coaches are re-certified. All the city school district coaches are required every year to take CPR and a sports safety training class, Hayes athletic director Kevin Reed said.

"I'm proud of all our coaches. There are so many situations and circumstances that we put them in. I'm proud of the people I work with," Reed said. "It was fortunate the way it all came out. A lot of people do not realize the situations coaches are in. Larry stepped up and did what needed to be done."

While Dayonne is not back in school yet, he has had tutoring and will return after the first of the year. For now, he is attending the basketball games, sitting on the bench next to the coach and rooting for the team he so wanted to be a part of.

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**RAISES**

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Cannon wrote in the Oct. 12 memo.

At the time, Cannon's salary was reset to \$104,173, the maximum allowed for an employee of Cannon's classification under county guidelines, with a one-time bonus of about \$4,000.

Later in the Oct. 12 memo, Cannon instructed county department heads to not use remaining salary appropriations for pay increases or bonuses before the end of 2008.

Offices that didn't comply would have their 2009 salary appropriations decreased, Cannon wrote.

"It is not fair that one department give pay increase(s) or bonuses because they have money left in their account," he wrote.

The move was intended to prevent various offices from "doling out" extra money within their budgets, something that had been done in previous years, Cannon said.

The 2009 budget for the commissioners office is about \$2,400 more than the office spent in 2008.

Cannon said he had reservations about how the raise would be perceived in light of the flat funding of county offices.

Commissioner Glenn Evans said he had little control about public perception of the raises, and that he

only did what he thought was right. He said it was admirable that Cannon was willing to give up a portion of his salary.

"I see it as fair compensation for what they did," Evans said.

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**YES MAN (PG-13)**  
WED: 2:00  
THURS: 7:15

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WED: 2:00 • ENDS WEDNESDAY!

**FOUR CHRISTMASSES (PG-13)**  
WED: 2:00 • ENDS WEDNESDAY!

**STARTS CHRISTMAS DAY: BEDTIME STORIES (PG)**  
THURSDAY: 7:30

**MARLEY & ME (PG)**  
THURSDAY: 7:00