



North Cross School

Richard Cook

Appointed 1972; Retiring 2017

4254 Colonial Avenue
Roanoke, VA 24018

540-989-6641

888-637-6641

540-989-7299 FAX

www.northcross.org

"His class is like sitting in front of a fire hydrant of knowledge, and just taking it all down."—ZACK H'DOUBLER '17

"Richard Cook is as an integral part of this school, and we will miss the steadying influence of his humor and long experience. I can't imagine a North Cross without Richard."—UPPER SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHER JENNIFER SANDERS

You know you're at the end of an era when the person who has been teaching history here for over 40 years—someone who started when our namesake Billy Northcross Ellis was here—is leaving the classroom. Anyone who stays at a school for over four decades sees something truly exceptional in that institution and in its students. Also, think of it: many of our legacy students have had the opportunity to have the same history teacher their parent had when at the school. "It was really cool having Mr. Cook as a history teacher and being able to have the same experiences as my father did when he was a student here," remarks Caroline McGimsey '17 (daughter of Rich '82).

Beyond his contributions in the classroom, he is often referred to as the Father of Soccer in the Roanoke Valley. Hired in 1972 by John Tucker, the second headmaster at North Cross, when he was brought in not only to teach middle school history, but also to start a soccer program at North Cross. Cook remembers how this program grew beyond our campus: "In 1975, after a couple of cold, but successful seasons at North Cross (soccer was a winter sport at the time, November–March), I was approached by the Director of Parks and Recreation, Owen Grogan, to start a soccer program in Roanoke City. With the help of NCS parents, like Prill Prillaman, Carl Bivens, Steve Bodley, and George Logan, we started a successful program in the city. A few years after that I helped start the programs in Roanoke County, with Gary Huff, and another in Salem, with Bruce Mann. There soon became a need for more competition and Bodley and I, along with John Sarber, started a travel program which became Roanoke Stars. Soon after that Stars spread into adjoining areas and people like Cecil Hoyt helped develop soccer in the James River and Botetourt areas, and the programs have continued to grow and become what they are today."

"Richard Cook was not only knowledgeable about soccer but he was willing to lead the valley in the right direction with the development of Roanoke Valley Youth Soccer (Roanoke Star), his soccer camps, adult leagues, and the many players, parents, and coaches that he taught, influenced, and motivated. Richard was a big reason that I ended up at North Cross. Those same qualities that he showed as a soccer coach he also displayed as a teacher and advisor to the students that he mentored at North Cross." reflects Grayson Prillaman '88

In the classroom, his approach included humor and a sincere interest in his students' success—inside and outside of the classroom: "Mr. Cook's passion for teaching is obvious from the first day of class. He never fails to go the extra mile to help students, and he is always the first to congratulate students on their success whether it's in class, on stage, or on the athletic field," commented Anna Cooper '14. Senior Helen Schmedtje sums it up: "Mr. Cook is awesome because he not only cares about history but he cares about student's interests beyond the classroom."



North Cross School

His colleagues also appreciate his guidance and support: “Richard has served as a mentor and guide for me the past twelve years. I can always count on him. From making the coffee in the morning to being the voice of the faculty in meeting, Richard is the rock of faculty. It has been an honor and pleasure to work with him for the past decade,” says Upper School science teacher Jennifer Landry.

Indeed, the lesson he most wishes to impart on his students applies to the classroom, to the field, and to life: “The one thing I hope all of my students know, is that if you work hard, you succeed.” His long career here is testimony to his own success from his hard work; success as a teacher, coach, mentor and friend. While we realize all good things must come to an end, there is one condition we have for his retirement: He and his wife Nancy must visit often. After all, there’s a parking spot with your name on it.