RAE NEEDHAM

VALLEY FORGE HALL OF FAME INDUCTION

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Rae Needham is a 1969 Valley Forge graduate who returned as a school counselor after living in Boston for 18 years to help students achieve their goals and dreams. Hailing from a family of educators, she has always loved working with others whether it be in a school climate or any other surrounding. Her road back to Valley Forge has been a very interesting one.

Rae graduated from Cleveland State University with a Bachelor of Arts in 1974 with a major in Theater. Realizing that acting and directing were not going to pay the bills, she received her teaching certification at the secondary level in English, Speech and Dramatic Arts in 1975. She taught English at Maple Heights High School and then moved to Boston in l978. Rae reconnected with kids when she got a job teaching English, speech and dramatic arts to 7th and 8th grade students as well as directing the school plays at Melrose Junior High School. She was also hired as a Dramatic Arts Instructor at the Boston Center for Adult Education where she developed and taught four theater evening classes.

It was Rae’s decision to work toward and then receive her Master’s degree in Education in Counseling Psychology at the University of Massachusetts Boston in 1987 that ultimately led her back to Ohio where she was hired as a school counselor in 1992 at Valley Forge, her high school alma mater. This is when the fun really began for her! Rae absolutely loved working with the students. Her guiding principle was to treat everyone with respect and to be consistent in her dealings with all. Rae came to school every day with an attitude filled with enthusiasm, energy and commitment. She treated everyone with dignity, really listened to what anyone had to say and was truly an advocate for all students. She had an open door policy and took the time to work with any student who walked through it regardless of the time of day.

Some of Rae’s favorite and/or proudest moments throughout her 20 years as a counselor were:

* Implementation of an Anti-Bullying program which included an assembly, the creation of lesson plans to be taught in every English classroom; posters made by students; and an anti-bullying club.
* Skits that were created and acted by students at behavior assemblies centering around conflict resolution.
* Working with the Valley Forge PTA on scholarships and Winner’s Circle. Rae was awarded with the State Life Membership to the Valley Forge PTSA, for which she is very grateful.
* Lunch duty; walking around the cafeteria or monitoring the courtyard next to it gave Rae an opportunity to relate to students outside of an office. It was a time that the kids could see another side of her and vice versa. Problem solving was done in a different environment. They even taught her how to play hacky sack!
* Becoming Guidance Department Chair; working with colleagues and parents.
* Mentoring Cleveland State University school counseling student interns
* Directing the school plays, including the school musicals, for four years. Our cast members were very diverse. They included the theater students, athletes, cheerleaders, special needs students and groups becoming one as they worked on both the acting and technical theater aspects of the productions.

Rae is a professional who believes that integrity, honesty, tolerance, humor, and a solid work ethic will always win the day. She wanted the students to do more than just graduate – she wanted them to thrive at whatever their career choice may be. She believes that everyone has individual talents and strengths and will succeed if given the chance. It was her job to help him or her discover that gift. She kept urging them to be the best that they can be, to reach for the stars and to never take “no” for an answer. Being a school counselor is the most fulfilling thing she has ever done!

We appreciate all she has done for kids over the years!