

# Small Town People

# Big Time Influence

*By Larry Dozier*

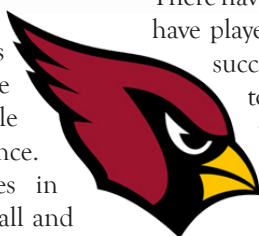
Who would have thought? One small town not only has a successful community college, but also leads an entire community college system, stretching its influence far outside of its city borders. Amazing! This small town college has developed a unique and successful combination of academics and athletics that has been rarely achieved. From the start, it has recruited top athletes, while providing them with academic excellence. They have won 10 National Titles in Cheerleading, 8 in Women's Basketball and 2 in Football. In academics for 2016, this college was ranked No. 9 in the State of Texas as one of the best community colleges in Texas. Do you know the name of this small town college? It's Athens' very own - TVCC!

In 2016, the TVCC Women's Basketball Team played in the National Championship Game, The Cheerleaders won the National Championship and the Men's Football Team won their bowl game, finishing at #3 in the country. And, head coach Brad Smiley was named the SWJFCFC Conference Coach of the Year. Because of Coach Smiley and his coaching staff's dedication to academics and

athletics, many of the TVCC football players have been able to earn college scholarships to play at Division 1 & 2 universities, while others have had successful professional careers.

There have been many great men and women who have played a significant role in the uncommon success of HCJC/TVCC. I'm just going to honor a few of them. According to the official City of Athens website, E. J. Thompson, County Clerk of Henderson County is credited with being the first citizen of Athens.

However, Mrs. Dull Averiette gave Athens its name in honor of the ancient city of Greece



by the same name, because she felt Athens, Texas could become the cultural center of Henderson County. And just as she predicted, Athens high School is now located in the exact spot on the tree shaded hill where the original Averiette home was built before the Civil War. This large majestic rustic home was destroyed by a fire and the Athens Public School System purchased that site. It included about 30 acres that now has several school buildings and athletic fields.

According to the Texas State Historical Association, in 1946 a junior college for Henderson County was authorized to start serving students in Athens, Texas “at the center where seven paved roads met”. The majority of HCJC’s first students were military veterans seeking vocational training. Mrs. Averiette’s dream had begun to be fulfilled.

In September 1986, the Board of Trustees approved a name change from Henderson County Junior College (HCJC) to Trinity Valley Community College (TVCC). And just like that, the Hick-Jick-nick-name was left behind in a cloud of dust. After the name change, TVCC expanded to include campuses in Kaufman, Terrell, Palestine, the Trinity Prison Project and the Small Business Development Center in Athens.

As you can see, HCJC/TVCC has had an amazing history, while enjoying uncommon success in academics and athletics. Perhaps the greatest most outstanding component to that success has been the quality of the college’s staff and instructors. One of those exemplary faculty members at TVCC is Professor Mike Peek who



has been a faculty/staff member for over 40 years. He has truly had a major influence in both of TVCC’s areas of uncommon achievement – academics and athletics.

Immediately after Peek was awarded his M.B.A in 1974, he took a job with Dun & Bradstreet. But since 1978, he has served at TVCC as the Director of Student Activities, an adjunct instructor and a full time Economics Professor, teaching dual credit courses given at high schools and business courses offered at TVCC in Athens. But, like TVCC, one of the outstanding qualities he possesses is the rare ability to excel in both academics and athletics. In addition to his academic duties, Peek is a Board Member of the TVCC Athletic Hall of Fame and a Referee for JUCO Football, Division 1 Football and the NFL.

Talk about making a difference! Peek and TVCC are more examples of how our community has influence far and wide, and punches far above its weight.

Longtime TVCC instructor and former director of student activities, Mike Peek (far left), was selected as one of the replacement referees during the NFL Referees Association strike in 2012.

