

FFHS Auditorium Named for David E. Oaksmith, Jr.

On March 14, the Dare County Board of Education gathered with community leaders and members to unveil a plaque to signify that the First Flight High School auditorium has been named the David E. Oaksmith, Jr. Auditorium. Oaksmith's daughters - Laura Oaksmith, Colleen Oaksmith, Kerry Oaksmith-Sanders, Maria Oaksmith, and Megan Oaksmith were all present for the occasion, as well as three of his grandchildren. The plaque will be positioned on the wall at the school's front entrance near the auditorium.



The Board of Education honored Oaksmith for his outstanding service to Dare County Schools for over 30 years, which began with Oaksmith as a math teacher at Manteo High School for 14 years. He served on the Board of Education for 17 years - 13 of them as chairman, from July 16, 1998 to July 26, 2011. He served as a board member until his untimely death in November, 2015.

Many remarkable accomplishments were achieved during Oaksmith's tenure on the Board of Education, including the completion of a \$165 million construction project. Four new schools were built, including Cape Hatteras Elementary School, First Flight High School, Manteo Middle School, and Nags Head Elementary School. Major renovations and/or additions were finished at Manteo High School, Cape Hatteras Secondary School, Manteo Elementary School, Kitty Hawk Elementary School, and First Flight Middle School.

His vision played a key role in the establishment of an education foundation and the construction of affordable housing for teachers. Oaksmith advocated for increased offerings and enrollment in Advanced Placement courses. He recognized the importance of deterring substance abuse with a random drug testing policy for students in privileged activities. He was an ardent supporter of the North Carolina Pre-K program, formerly called More at Four.

Oaksmith always said that these accomplishments were the result of a team effort, which included all members of the Board of Education and the staff at schools and the central office. "Today, however, we pay tribute to Mr. Oaksmith's very significant individual role in these impressive milestones for Dare County Schools," noted Superintendent of Schools Dr. Sue F. Burgess in her remarks. "Mr. Oaksmith's legacy will continue to shine in Dare County Schools for many years to come."

FFHS Principal Tim Albert and Director of Facilities Jim Winebarger unveiled the plaque on the Superintendent's cue.

Burgess said, "On June 14, 2016, the Dare County Board of Education voted to name the auditorium at First Flight High School the David E. Oaksmith, Jr. Auditorium. The inscription on the plaque reads, 'To recognize his dedicated service to the children and citizens of Dare County as a teacher for 14 years and as a member of the Board of Education for 17 years, and to acknowledge his significant role in advancing a construction / renovation program, and to honor his continuous and fervent support of the arts, this facility is named in memory of David E. Oaksmith, Jr. Chairman of the Board of Education, 1998-2011.'"