

## **Mary Souther nominated by Haley Rose**

When I think of Ms. Souther, I normally associate her with four words, each of which represents what she has been to me; a coach, a teacher, a mentor, and a leader. I have had the privilege to know Ms. Souther for the past two years of my high school career, and she has truly helped to make my time at DHS memorable.

I first met Ms. Souther as an athlete. Besides soccer, I have always liked running, and as I left Renfro to become a freshman, I knew that I wanted to try a new sport. I have always been on the shy side, which is partly why I thought that trying out for another sport would be ideal; it would help me to meet new people who shared similar passions, enabling me to have a comfortable transition into high school. So, with the encouragement of my parents, I attended my first cross country informational meeting.

I actually didn't meet Coach Souther there, but rather on the day of my first practice. When I showed up on a summer morning at Winona Park, I was welcomed by one of the friendliest people that I know today. Ms. Souther talked to me excitedly, describing what we'd be doing, while also asking me questions about myself. Immediately, I felt at ease thanks to her, despite barely knowing any of the other runners around me. While I ran a lot on my own, I had never really raced before, which became another source of worry for me. Would I be able to do it? Would I do well? Would I make the team? What if I came in last at the first meet? Would the other team members like me? All of these questions flooded my head as I began to think of what the season would look like. However, I was not to fear; Coach Souther was ready to guide me. She helped me practice and taught me how to pace myself, as well as other techniques, like how to run up hills to save energy. However, more importantly, she reinforced the idea that she'd be proud of all of us no matter how we did on race day. While she is competitive and loves to win, just as we all do, she taught us that there are more important things than winning. She showed us how strong love for your friends can be when you're a part of an amazing team. She respected hard work and got so thrilled when anyone ran a PR, no matter what the actual time was. She built so many amazing memories for us, such as organizing team dinners before the meets, planning fun barbecues, and even chaperoning an end-of-year camping trip to celebrate the seniors. Her continuous dedication and commitment to ensuring that we are happy is something that I'll always admire.

When I found out that Coach Souther would be my math teacher for my

sophomore year, I was definitely excited, and ok....I'll admit it- slightly nervous. If I got a bad grade on a test would she make do a crazy hard workout at practice? Fortunately for me, Ms. Souther approached teaching just as she did coaching. She was so understanding, and answered all of her students' questions, no matter how simple they were. She never made you feel bad if you didn't get something right away. She was always there to help. She offered tutoring every morning and would try to work with you personally to fit it into your schedule. She also, unlike some teachers I've had, was very reasonable regarding test retakes. As long as you worked hard and paid attention in class, you could raise your grade on any unit you weren't as confident with. She is one of those awesome teachers who actually realizes that learning is not just about memorizing, but also about comprehending the content you're studying. As a student, that is something that I'll never fail to appreciate. While we did have a decent amount of homework in her class, she worked to make it so much more manageable for us. Rather than having a worksheet due each night, she gave her students a bunch of problems to complete over the course of two weeks. I cannot describe how convenient this was. With this system, I could organize my days the way I wanted to. If I had a test in another subject one day, I could spend the night studying for that, rather than using the extra time to complete other homework. Then, when I had free time, I could focus on my math. I can whole-heartedly say that her style of teaching saved me many hours of sleep and helped me to do better on other tests, which I'll always be thankful for.

All in all, as a person, Ms. Souther is the absolute best. As you can probably tell from above, she is very well-rounded. She's funny, selfless, smart, understanding, and super thoughtful. She's one of those teachers who I know I can always go to if I need to talk about anything. She cares so much about DHS and the students in it, which is why I believe that she deserves this award. She works so hard to unite our school, and I really think that much of the great culture among the students can be attributed to her. I'm so grateful for all that she has done to help me and many others have incredible times at high school.