

Martin “Tony” Denning

Summary

Martin Anthony “Tony” Denning is a 60-year-old retired teacher and real estate investor who lives in Bladen County, NC with his wife Kimberly. They have two children, Ali and Kenan, who live in Cumberland County. Denning and his wife own over 150 acres of timber and farm land in Bladen, Sampson, and Wayne Counties for which they received \$150 in federal farm subsidies in the past 20 years.

Legal records relating to Denning show that he has avoided prosecution for serious traffic and criminal matters. Specifically, he had cases dismissed or cases without fines relating to: Driving while Impaired (1989), Expired Registration/Tags (2002), Improper Equipment – Speedometer (2015), and Speeding (2015). In 2016, he was cited for driving while impaired and toxicology reports showed he was under the influence of Diazepam, Nordiazepam, and Oxycodone. After an initial jury found him guilty of driving while impaired, he appealed the case and motioned to have the toxicology results suppressed because they included an incorrect date of birth. A second jury, in August 2017, found him guilty of running a red light, but deadlocked on the charge of driving while intoxicated. Ultimately, Denning pled guilty to reckless driving, and agreed to probation and fines for the charge. Included in the case file was a driving history, which showed that he was cited more than 20 times in 30 years on various charges.

Denning was also sued by his Ohio-based sister for mismanagement of rental properties left to them by their deceased parents. According to Mary Kaye Denning, the Dennings permitted the properties to fall in disarray and pocketed rents, rather than paying for maintenance fees. The parties agreed to sell at least one parcel, split the proceeds, and place \$10,000 in an escrow fund to settle future disputes relating to the rental-property business.

As a candidate, Denning has filed as a candidate with the State of North Carolina in early 2017 and failed to file any subsequent paperwork. After the North Carolina State Board of Elections assessed a \$500 fine against him in January 2018 and threatened to terminate his campaign committee, Denning reached out to the State Board of Elections with a three-page, handwritten letter claiming that his treasurer resigned without notifying him and that, as a first time candidate, he was unaware of filing requirements. He requested that the fine be waived and filed the delinquent forms showing no money raised or spent.

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Background and Biography

Identifying Information

Name: Martin Anthony “Tony” Denning

DOB: June 8, 1957

Address: 97 Lee Street
White Lake, NC 28337

Family: Kimberly Denning (1962). Two adult children: Ali Marilee (2/18/1992) and Kenan Johnson (10/8/1996)

Biography

The following biography was taken from Denning’s candidacy announcement that ran in the [BladenOnline on December 12, 2017](#):

Today I am formally announcing my candidacy for the Democratic Primary for North Carolina House District 22. At present House District 22 is comprised of Bladen County and a portion of Sampson County. Currently the courts and the North Carolina Legislature are determining the final district lines for House 22.

I am a native of Sampson County and currently reside in Bladen County. In 1975 I graduated from Lakewood High School and I am a member of the Class of 1979 from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Additionally, I completed post-graduate work at Fayetteville State University.

It has been my pleasure to serve as an educator in Sampson, Bladen, and Cumberland counties for over thirty years. For most of those years I also served as women’s basketball coach and football coach at the high school level.

I am married (wife, Kim Daughtry Denning) and have two adult children (daughter, Marilee and son, Kenan).

While the concerns of the citizens of N.C. House 22 reflect many of the same concerns of all North Carolinians, it is my desire to represent District 22 and work to bring specific development and growth to our area. District 22 has fallen behind other areas of our state in economic growth, infrastructure improvements,

and educational resources due to, among other reasons, a lack of vision and action by our current representation.

As a member of the North Carolina House I will work to secure the completion of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline in an environmentally safe way to bring greater economic development to southeastern North Carolina. The ACP can be constructed in such a way as to protect the environment while also being an engine to spur economic growth.

I will also strive to secure the benefits and retirement programs for our educators and work to provide adequate and responsible compensation packages to keep our experienced teachers in state while also offering incentives, including the NC Teaching Fellows Program, to prospective teachers and competitive starting salaries for new teachers.

As the representative for N.C. House 22 I will also address criminal justice issues and seek to keep partisan politics out of the process for electing judges. I will work with local law enforcement agencies to help secure the resources they need to serve and protect our communities. I will challenge any attempt to make our courts a partisan controlled system that potentially limits our citizens access to a fair and equitable legal system. Political gerrymandering has negatively impacted our legislature; we dare not let that happen to our court system.

The citizens of N.C. House District 22 deserve a representative who will speak for all of the people; work to provide economic and educational opportunities; promote the continual improvements of the infrastructure needs of District 22; and hold true to the promises made during the campaign.

I am a conservative Democrat. I will address every issue on the merits of the law and not to follow in lock step with any political party. However, I will not abandon a party label in the middle of an elected term to "fit in" to a party structure, garner partisan support, or promote my own political future.

I seek the support of those within House 22 who are not concerned about party politics but concerned about the economic growth for the region and the prosperity of all of the citizens of House 22 and the state of North Carolina.

Voter Registration

Denning registered to vote as a Democrat at his current address on November 4, 2016 (Voter ID: 00000059044). While he frequently participates in elections, there is evidence that he skipped primary elections in 2016 (presidential primary), and 2010 (mid-term primary), and all elections in 2012, among others. The first municipal election on record with his participation occurred in November 2017.

| Election | Method | County | Party Affiliation (if applicable) |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------|--|
| 5/5/1992 Primary | Legacy Data | Sampson | |
| 11/3/1992 General | Legacy Data | Sampson | |
| 5/3/1994 Primary | Legacy Data | Sampson | |
| 11/8/1994 General | Legacy Data | Sampson | |
| 11/5/1996 General | Legacy Data | Sampson | |
| 5/5/1998 Primary | Legacy Data | Sampson | |
| 11/3/1998 General | Legacy Data | Sampson | |
| 5/2/2000 Primary | Legacy Data | Sampson | |
| 11/7/2000 General | Legacy Data | Sampson | |
| 9/10/2002 Primary | In-person | Sampson | Democratic |
| 11/5/2002 General | In-person | Sampson | |
| 7/20/2004 Primary | Absentee | Sampson | Democratic |
| 11/2/2004 General | In-person | Sampson | |
| 5/2/2006 Primary | In-person | Sampson | Democratic |
| 11/7/2006 General | In-person | Sampson | |
| 5/6/2008 Primary | In-person | Sampson | Democratic |
| 11/4/2008 General | ABS-1Stop | Sampson | |
| 11/2/2010 General | In-person | Sampson | |
| 5/6/2014 Primary | ABS-Mail | Bladen | Democratic |
| 11/4/2014 General | ABS-1Stop | Bladen | |
| 11/8/2016 General | ABS-1Stop | Bladen | |
| 11/7/2017 Municipal | ABS-1Stop | Bladen | |

Professional License

Denning's teaching license expired on June 30, 2017 (Lic. #: 699084). He previously held specialties in English (grades 9-12), Intermediate (grades 4-6), Elementary Education (grades K-6), Social Studies (grades 6-9), and Language Arts (grades 6-9).

There is no indication that disciplinary action was ever taken against Denning.

Legal and Financial Records

Property Taxes in Cumberland County

Denning paid several late personal property tax payments on a Jeep WRS, a Cadillac CTS, and a BMW 328i.

Jeep WRS

| Year | Due Date | Amount Paid | Date Paid | Penalty/Interest |
|------|------------|-------------|------------|------------------|
| 2008 | 9/30/2008 | \$167.32 | 1/16/2009 | \$11.31 |
| 2009 | 9/30/2009 | \$144.93 | 10/13/2009 | \$6.91 |
| 2010 | 9/30/2010 | \$116.07 | 12/2/2010 | \$7.08 |
| 2011 | 10/31/2011 | \$103.40 | 5/3/2012 | \$8.97 |
| 2012 | 11/30/2012 | \$88.24 | 12/5/2012 | \$4.20 |
| 2013 | 10/31/2013 | \$76.80 | 3/24/2014 | \$5.69 |

Cadillac CTS

| Year | Due Date | Amount Paid | Date Paid | Penalty/Interest |
|------|------------|-------------|------------|------------------|
| 2008 | 9/30/2008 | \$371.77 | 1/16/2009 | \$25.13 |
| 2009 | 9/30/2009 | \$307.95 | 10/13/2009 | \$14.67 |
| 2010 | 9/30/2010 | \$235.67 | 12/2/2010 | \$14.39 |
| 2011 | 9/30/2011 | \$221.34 | 5/3/2012 | \$20.58 |
| 2012 | 11/30/2012 | \$199.87 | 12/5/2012 | \$9.52 |
| 2013 | 10/31/2013 | \$189.71 | 3/24/2014 | \$14.06 |

BMW 328i

| Year | Due Date | Amount Paid | Date Paid | Penalty/Interest |
|------|------------|-------------|-----------|------------------|
| 2013 | 11/30/2013 | \$241.74 | 3/24/2014 | \$16.34 |

Property Taxes in Bladen County

The Dennings' home in Bladen County at 97 Lee Street shows a mailing address of 2508 Spring Valley Road in Fayetteville, NC (Tax ID: 0011804). The home shows sporadic on-time property tax payments and a current assessed value of \$97,770. As of January 18, 2018, the home showed \$272.42 due in property taxes, including \$17.11 in interest.

| Year | Date Paid | Amount Paid | Penalty/Interest |
|------|-----------|-------------|------------------|
| 2008 | 5/4/2009 | \$503.62 | \$16.98 |

| | | | |
|------|------------|----------|--|
| 2009 | 1/4/2010 | \$483.66 | \$0 |
| 2010 | 1/4/2011 | \$483.66 | \$0 |
| 2011 | 12/17/2015 | \$666.82 | \$180.16 |
| 2012 | 12/17/2015 | \$623.29 | \$136.63 |
| 2013 | 12/17/2015 | \$579.76 | \$93.10 |
| 2014 | 12/17/2015 | \$536.23 | \$49.57 |
| 2015 | 12/17/2015 | \$855.31 | \$0 |
| 2016 | 1/19/2017 | \$600.00 | \$272.42 remains due with \$17.11 penalty |

Court Records – Traffic Cases

Denning was cited for several traffic violations in the past three decades.

- Driving while Impaired (case no. 89CR006975)
 - Filed on October 15, 1989 in Sampson County District Court
 - Dismissed without leave on February 5, 1990
- Expired Registration/Tag (case no. 02CR002131)
 - Filed on March 22, 2002 in Sampson County
 - Dismissed without leave on April 19, 2002
- Improper Equipment, Speedometer (case no. 15IF702816)
 - Filed on September 23, 2015 in Bladen County District Court
 - No fine issued
- Speeding, 72mph in a 55mph zone (case no. 15CR703342)
 - Filed on October 30, 2015 in Bladen County District Court
 - Dismissed without leave by the DA on August 25, 2016

2016 DWI Case

On May 27, 2016, Denning was arrested for driving while impaired and failure to stop at a steady red light (case no. 16CRS001842).

According to toxicology records from the case (blood), Denning had Diazepam, Nordiazepam, and Oxycodone in his system at the time of his arrest. The police report also included a comprehensive driving record for Denning back to 1977, although there is no indication that he was convicted on all of these charges:

- Following too closely

- Accident
- Speeding, 46/35
- Accident
- Safe Movement Violation
- Speeding, 45/35
- Reckless Driving
- Speeding, 74/55
- Failure to Yield Right of Way
- Accident
- Exceeding Safe Limit
- Violation of Probation
- Accident
- Speeding, 64/55
- Exceeding Safe Limit
- Accident
- Speeding, 60/55
- Failure to Secure Passenger under 16
- Speeding, 34/25
- Accident
- Accident
- Improper Equipment
- DUP

An initial court case before a jury in May 2017 ended in a guilty verdict, which Denning appealed to Superior Court in August 2017.

In August 2017, a second trial with Denning as the defendant occurred in the case. Denning's attorney submitted a motion to suppress the blood test because of an error in the date of birth on the record, which indicated it belonged to Marin Dennings, DOB 6/15/1989 rather than the defendant. They also motioned to suppress any statements made by the defendant before his Miranda Rights were read.

According to the Judgment/Order signed by Judge James Floyd Ammons, the jury deadlocked on the DWI charge and a mistrial on the count was declared. He was found responsible for the redlight charge and a court cost of \$388.50 was assessed plus a \$200 fine.

In Open Court, the defendant appeared for trial on the charge of driving while impaired and failure to stop for steady red light and entered a plea of not guilty. A jury was empaneled as appears in the records, heard evidence, arguments and charge of the court. The jury deliberated and returned to open court and stated they could not reach a unanimous verdict to both counts. Therefore, the court withdrew juror number 1 and a mistrial was declared as to the driving while

impaired. As to the failure to stop for the steady red light he is found responsible. The court orders that he pay a \$200 fine, but if the defendant obtains an assessment, the fine will be waived. Court cost is ordered for \$388.50.

Denning pled guilty to Careless and Reckless Driving on October 5, 2017. The agreement included \$600 in restitution and 12 months of supervised probation. As a result, the DWI charge was dismissed, even though a notation shows that the alcohol concentration was more than 0.15 at the time. According to the judge, Denning had a recent "safe-driving record" with no four-point convictions in the prior five years, he is polite, and he accepted responsibility. Therefore, he was released with a level 5 punishment (rather than incarceration).

Crime Victim

In July 2015, a Martin A. Denning reported being the victim of larceny. A number of items totalling over \$13,000 was reported stolen including a refrigerator, dresser, freezer, water pump, stove, bedroom carpet, broken windows and a 1979 truck.¹

Civil Suit

In 2011, Mary Kaye Denning sued her brother and his wife in Bladen County to dissolve a family partnership relating to property conveyed to them by their parents beginning in the 1970s.

According to Mary Kaye's complaint, Denning and his wife were operating the rental properties and providing maintenance without any accounting records being sent to her. As a result, the properties had fallen into disrepair and income was kept by the Dennings. She requested a full accounting back to 1992.

Despite her claims, the statute of limitations only allowed Mary Kaye to request documentation back to 2008. In return, she requested sale of the property and her proceeds from the sale.

A partition sale order was signed on November 4, 2011. Per the agreement, taxes and real estate fees would be taken from the sale of at least four parcels and then the proceeds would be split in half between the parties. An additional trust or escrow account with \$10,000 would be established to resolve further disagreements.

- Mary Kaye Denning v. Martin Anthony Denning and Kimberly Daughtry Denning (case no. 11SP00044)
 - Filed on April 6, 2011 in Bladen County Superior Court
 - Property sold and partition agreement signed on November 4, 2011

¹ <https://clintonnc.com/news/crime/1876/crimewatch-47>

Incidentally, the highest bidder was Billy Ray Daughtry (\$55,500), Kimberly's father, who assigned his bid to the Dennings. Upon completion, Mary Kaye and Denning were each given checks for \$22,885.35 following all accounting of the sale.

Farm Subsidies

According to the Environmental Working Group's Farm Subsidy Database, Denning was the recipient of \$150 in farm subsidies between 2000 and 2003. The commodity subsidies were paid for tobacco crops.

| Year | Type | Amount |
|-------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 2000 | Commodity – Tobacco | \$95 |
| 2001 | Commodity – Tobacco | \$34 |
| 2002 | None | \$0 |
| 2003 | Commodity – Tobacco | \$21 |

Campaign Activity

Denning filed a Statement of Organization – Committee to Elect Martin (Tony) Denning to NC House Seat 22 (ID: STA-VHIY26-C-001) with the North Carolina State Board of Elections on March 6, 2017.

Non-Compliance Letter

On January 12, 2018, the State of North Carolina issued a letter to Lou Ann Williams, the treasurer for Denning's committee. According to the notice, they were delinquent in their periodic campaign finance filing and were within 20 days of having the committee terminated.

Dear Ms. Williams:

This is official notice that the 2017 Mid Year Semi-Annual Report has not been received by the State Board of Elections.

In addition, if the report is not filed within twenty (20) days after the date of this letter, the Board is mandated by Chapter 1.0104(d) of Title 8 of the North Carolina Administrative Code to issue a Notice of Termination of Active Status. This status renders the committee ineligible to receive or made contributions until such time as it has filed the delinquent report and satisfied any statutory penalty incurred as a result of noncompliance with the provisions of Article 22A of Chapter 163 of the General Statutes.

If you need assistance in this matter, you may contact Nadine Lewis in this office at (919) 814-0700.

**Sincerely,
Amy Strange, Deputy Director
Campaign Finance & Operations**

Denning appealed, via a handwritten letter, the \$500 penalty assessed against his committee, claiming ignorance as a first-time candidate and selecting an incapable treasurer on January 26, 2018.

Dear Honorable Committee,

I, Martin A. (Tony) Denning am writing this letter in hopes that you will reconsider and hopefully rescind the five hundred (\$500.00) fine my campaign has been assessed for not having my first financial form in on time.

I have had to change my treasurer from Mrs. Louanna Smith Williams to the Reverend Richard Spell. In doing so, through the cooperative and helpful staff at the N.C. State Board of Elections, I learned that the clock began on my candidacy on March 4, 2017 when I went to Raleigh to express my interest in running as a Democrat for seat #22 in the State House of Representatives. This is my first time as a candidate for any type of public office and I was ignorant about all of the procedure involved.

After initially enthusiastically agreeing to act as treasurer for my campaign, Mrs. Williams resigned without telling me. She did however contact Mr. Spell and relate to him she felt overwhelmed and inadequate to function in this voluntary capacity.

Once Mr. Spell contacted me and told me of Mrs. Williams decision he agreed to act as treasurer. At that time I called Mr. Sanford Chancellor and asked him if I needed to come to Raleigh to change that information on the original form I filled out. He assured me that wasn't necessary; that he could handle it via the telephone.

Therefore, whether through my ignorance of the proper steps to take as a first-time candidate, or my waiting to find out exactly where the district 22 lines would wind up falling, I was under the impression that my candidacy would not officially begin until after my planned personal on, or soon after February 12, 2018.

I accept responsibility for both misconceptions. However, because my campaign has not raised any money whatsoever at this point, I am formally requesting a positive response to this appeal to rescind the five-hundred dollar fine my campaign has been assessed.

I understand Mr. Chancellor is now in another department of state government, and in his defense, perhaps the changed information I gave him via the phone was misplaced when he moved on, or in the move when the NC Board of Elections moved offices. I was unaware Mrs. Williams was still receiving E-mails from the State Board of Elections until she called Mr. Spell in a panic; afraid she was responsible for the \$500.00 fine. She was assured if my appeal was unsuccessful that I would pay it. As a retired teacher/coach, this would be a hardship on me personally. I had planned to pay as much as possible toward my campaign on my own.

Mr. Spell, my treasurer, has subsequently turned in any forms due and we plan to comply with all future requirement, on time, and in a professional anner.

Please carefully consider this request to rescind the fine so that my attempt to seek office will not begin \$500.00 in the RED.

Sincerely,

Martin A. (Tony) Denning

(Source: <http://cf.ncsbe.gov/CFOrgLkup/ViewDocumentImage?DID=214543>)

Supports Atlantic Coast Pipeline

During his announcement for the state House, Denning expressed his support for completing the controversial Atlantic Coast natural gas pipeline in "an environmentally safe way" in order to spur economic development.²

Coaching Career

Overall there is very little media information about Denning other than in the context of his many years a girls high school basketball coach and English teacher for over a quarter-century, first at Midway High School in Sampson County (1984-2007) and then at Douglas Byrd High School in Fayetteville. (2007-2010).

Denning's coaching career was quite successful and earned him considerable praise and admiration from his players. He coached Midway to the state championship game twice.

² <http://www.clintonnc.com/news/25989/denning-throws-hat-in-ring#/search;query=%22Tony%20Denning>

In 2004, he was coach of the East team in the state high school All-Star Game. (Fayetteville Observer, 11/11/07) According to a 2004 article, Denning went 330-134 games in 18 seasons at Midway High, including 9 conference titles and 7 conference tournament titles. Denning had also been named Carolina Conference Coach of the Year several times.³

Exchanged Tapes with Rival Coach to Prevent Spying

In 2002, Denning and a coach from a rival school exchanged game tapes to prevent either school from "spying" on the other to gain an advantage.⁴

Controversial Transfer

Because Denning was popular as a teacher and coach at Midway, the decision to transfer him to another school where there was no coaching opportunity was controversial.

- He has been a mainstay as an educator, coach and friend in the Midway community for 22 years, but as of next year, Tony Denning will be transferred to Hobbton High School, effective when school starts back for the 2007-08 year on Aug.20.
- According to reports, the English 2 teacher was told Monday afternoon by superintendent Dr. Stewart Hobbs that he would be moved to the Newton Grove school. There was no mention of the transfer at Monday's Board of Education meeting because it is at the discretion of the superintendent to make transfers as he sees fit- transfers in the school system does not need to be brought before the board.
- So why the unexpected move? Denning isn't talking. When contacted Tuesday morning, he said simply, "no comment."
- Carolyn Royal, assistant superintendent of personnel for Sampson County Schools, confirmed Denning's transfer Tuesday afternoon - he will replace current English teacher Jeffrey Peake at HHS, who will be teaching in another county.
- Parents of children at Midway High School say it is a much different issue than a "needed" move. Denning has been an educator at Midway High School for the past 21 years.

³ <https://ncpreps.rivals.com/news/meet-the-coaches-east-west-basketball-mentors>

⁴ http://www.greensboro.com/fear-won-t-be-a-factor-in-state-championship-games/article_be3bedd3-27a1-5695-8ee3-3ad0b16d1baf.html;
http://www.greensboro.com/thomasville-ready-for-morning-run-the-run-and-gun-bulldogs/article_48d16dc5-c805-5874-8b05-3d204cf7d98b.html

- "It is personal," said one parent, who did not wish to be identified for this story. "I have three children that have been raised in the Midway District, and I have had nothing but good things to say about Mr. Denning. A man has been at Midway High School that long and then all of sudden he is moved for no reason? I don't get it. As far I am know, he has never been approached about anything ... Then Monday he is told that he will be transferring - it is not right." (Sampson Independent, 6/13/07)

The school superintendent defended the decision to transfer Denning.

- While the move is not a popular one to some, it most definitely a needed one, says Hobbs. "As superintendent, I represent every child and every school in Sampson County," he said. "Myself and the Board of Education - we have to look at the bigger picture on everything. We had a need for two strong English teachers at Hobbton High School and we felt like Mr. Denning's move would be in the best interest of the students, the school and to Mr. Denning The move also gives him the opportunity to coach if he wants to."
- Hobbs says that he realizes the move is not a popular one, but he feels that it will be for the "betterment" of all parties involved. "These moves are not done on the spur of the moment," he said. "This is discussed in depth with people involved, principals at the school as well as others. It is not like I just go and transfer people because I feel like it; I am looking at the big picture on this - I have to. Not everyone is going to like the change, but my job is to give every student in this school system the best educational opportunity and I feel like this move will be not only a plus for the school system and the students, but for Mr. Denning as well." (Sampson Independent, 6/13/07)

Denning decided not to go to Hobbton and instead accepted a position at Douglas Byrd High School in Fayetteville, where he would get the opportunity to resume coaching basketball.

- A winner of 391 games who twice took the Raiders to the state championship game, Denning received what he perceived as a pink slip in June. He was told he was being reassigned within Sampson County to Hobbton High School as an English teacher, and with no coaching duties.
- "I didn't ever intend to leave Midway. I had planned to work there until I retired," Denning said. "But a few selfish individuals were not going to let that happen, and I was not going somewhere I was not allowed to coach. I'm only 50 years old. I'm not ready to retire from coaching. There are a lot of us that teach so that we can coach, and in order to coach, I had to go outside of Sampson County." (Fayetteville Observer, 11/11/07)

The decision to transfer Denning was so controversial that it was one of the reasons that motivated a former student to later run for the County School Board.

- Although he never thought he would want to do it, Sampson County native Brant Blackburn has thrown his hat into the ring for a seat on the Sampson County Board of Education. Why? Over the last couple of years, Blackburn said he has seen things within the school system that didn't make too much sense and those issues really made him want to try and make a change.
- "Well there have been a couple of decisions that have been made over the last couple of years that really kind of spurred me to run," the 1990 Midway High School graduate said. "..... Another reason Blackburn, a 35-year-old senior project manager with Todd Construction (Ft. Bragg), decided to run was that he saw a former teacher, who devoted years of service to the system, moved from the school where he taught, in his opinion, for no reason.
- "That is the second reason why I am running," he said. "I feel that the board made a huge mistake was when Mr. Tony Denning was moved from Midway High School. He was a basketball coach and English teacher for years, in fact, he was my teacher in the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth grade. He was probably one of the best educators that I ever had - I can site specific examples from my sophomore and junior year in college where I referred back to his teachings that I benefited from. It is obvious - when you have someone in your school system who can make the kind of impact that is going to last years, years and years, you don't get rid of them. To my knowledge, we never got an explanation on just why he was moved and now, the county has lost him. To me, it was just wrong." (Sampson Independent, 3/30/08)

In May 2010, Denning retired, citing a desire to spend more time with family. (Fayetteville Observer, 5/18/10)

State House Candidacy

In December 2017, Denning announced his candidacy for the State House against incumbent William Brisson, who changed parties to Republican during his most recent term.

- A Sampson native who educated students in multiple counties for more than three decades is seeking to represent the people at the state level, with specific goals of spurring economic growth and looking out for teachers. He also had choice words for a midterm party swap move by his potential opponent. On Monday, **Martin (Tony) Denning** officially announced his candidacy as a Democratic candidate for

N.C. House District 22, which consists of most of Sampson and Bladen counties and a small portion of Johnston.

- Denning currently resides in Bladen County but is a native Sampsonian, graduating from Lakewood High School in 1975, from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1979 and completing post-graduate work at Fayetteville State. Denning is married to wife Kim Daughtry Denning and they have two adult children, daughter Marilee and son Kenan.
- "It has been my pleasure to serve as an educator in Sampson, Bladen and Cumberland counties for over 30 years," said Denning. "For most of those years, I also served as women's basketball coach and football coach at the high school level."
- While Denning concedes that the cares and concerns of the citizens of District 22 likely reflect those of many North Carolinians, he has as his goal to bring specific development and growth to the area. "District 22 has fallen behind other areas of our state in economic growth, infrastructure improvements and educational resources due to, among other reasons, a lack of vision and action by our current representation," said Denning.
- If elected to the N.C. House, Denning said he will work to secure the completion of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline in an environmentally safe way so some of that economic development can be realized in southeastern North Carolina.
- The natural gas pipeline, a 42-inch line extending for roughly 600 miles between West Virginia and eastern North Carolina, has been in the works for more than four years now. Its construction can be accomplished while protecting the environment and being "an engine to spur economic growth," Denning attested.
- The longtime teacher said he will also strive to secure benefits and retirement programs for educators and provide adequate and responsible compensation packages to keep experienced teachers in this state. He wants to see that incentives, including the N.C. Teaching Fellows Program, are extended to prospective teachers and competitive starting salaries are offered to new ones.
- "I will also address criminal justice issues and seek to keep partisan politics out of the process for electing judges. I will work with local law enforcement agencies to help secure the resources they need to serve and protect our communities," Denning said. "I will challenge any attempt to make our courts a partisan controlled system that potentially limits our citizens access to a fair and equitable legal system. Political gerrymandering has negatively impacted our Legislature," he continued. "We dare not let that happen to our court system."

In his announcement, Denning sought to downplay the party label and used that to criticize Brisson's switch.

- Denning eschewed the idea of party politics and pandering, chiding the party swap move. "I am a conservative Democrat. I will address every issue on the merits of the law and not to follow in lockstep with any political party. However, I will not abandon a party label in the middle of an elected term to 'fit in' to a party structure. I will not garner partisan support or promote my own political future," Denning stated. "I seek the support of those within House (District) 22 who are not concerned about party politics, but concerned about the economic growth for the region and the prosperity of all of the citizens of House 22 and the state of North Carolina." (Sampson Independent, 12/12/17)

News Coverage, 1989-2018

1989

MAR 1989 *Team Loses Championship Game*

Chrylene Myers scored a game-high 25 points Saturday afternoon, including the lone basket in overtime, giving Chocowinity a 55-54 win against Midway in the championship game of the N.C. High School Athletic Association Eastern Regional girls 1-A basketball tournament at South View High School.

Myers, selected the tournament's Most Valuable Player, made her decisive basket with 1:06 remaining in overtime, giving the Indians a 55-54 lead and producing the ninth lead change of the game.

Midway had taken a 54-53 lead with 1:49 left in overtime on a free throw by Michelle Jackson.

Chocowinity, 25-3, advances to the NCHSAA 2-A championship game against the Western Regional champion scheduled next Saturday at 2 p.m. at Carmichael Auditorium in Chapel Hill.

Chocowinity lost to Hobbton, 71-54, in last year's Eastern finals.

Tiffany Tew had 18 points and Michelle Jackson 12 for Midway, 21-7.

"I'm proud of my girls for the way they held in there," Chocowinity coach Larry Knox said. "We were hoping to make that last free throw (Chocowinity missed three straight one-and-one chances after taking the lead), but God doesn't give you what you want. He only

gives you what you need."

Midway missed three opportunities in the final 15 seconds that could have won the game.

Dawn Jackson missed a jumper, Michelle Jackson missed three shots inside and Teresa Barefoot missed the first of a one-and-one free throw opportunity.

"Both teams played very hard," Midway coach **Tony Denning** said. "They made one more point in overtime than we did.

"Our plan was to stay with them in the first half, then pull away in the second half," Denning said. "But the combination of foul trouble, turnovers, maybe tension and exhaustion cost us. We still had an opportunity to win." (Fayetteville Observer, 3/19/89)

1998

NOV 1998 14th Years As Midway High School Basketball Coach

Midway

Head Coach/years at school: Tony Denning/14th year

1997 record: 18-12, 11-3 conference

Returning starters: 3

Key Players: Elizabeth Bell, soph, guard (8 pts./game); Ashley McNeil, soph., center.
Could be playoff contender if: Bell gets support from her teammates in the backcourt.

Schedule: Dec. 1 at Union; Dec. 4, Lakewood; Dec. 8, Union; Dec. 10 at North Duplin; Dec. 11 at Lakewood; Dec. 15, Bladenboro; Dec. 18, North Duplin; Jan. 5, Rosewood; Jan. 6 at Bladenboro; Jan. 8, James Kenan; Jan. 12, at North Johnston, Jan. 13, ENCSD; Jan. 15, at Hobbton; Jan. 19, Princeton; Jan. 26, at Rosewood; Jan. 29, North Duplin; Feb. 2, North Johnston; Feb. 5, at James Kenan; Feb. 9 at Princeton; Feb. 11, at ENCSD; Feb. 12, Hobbton. Feb. 15-20, Carolinas 1A Conf. Tournament. (Wilmington Morning Star, 11/27/98)

2002

MAR 2002 Praises Star Player

Midway High School coach **Tony Denning** can't pick one thing Brittany Carroll is best at on the court. But he says he's never had a player that can do as many different things as well as she does.

"She's a consummate team player," Denning said of the three-year starter. "Because of her hustle and extra effort, all 11 of our girls try to do the same."

The junior guard will be a key figure Saturday as Midway goes after the state 1-A basketball title in an 11 a.m. game against Thomasville at the Smith Center in Chapel Hill.

She's a three-time all-conference player with one year of high school left .

She leads Midway in scoring at 15.0 points, and in assists at 5.8.

Last weekend, she was named Most Outstanding Player in the 1-A Eastern Regional tournament in Greenville as she led Midway to its first regional title since 1992.

But to hear Carroll tell it, she's just part of the gang .

"My job is to distribute the ball, not score points," she said. "We have people like Valeria (Williams), Jennifer (Honeycutt), Jamie (Blackmon) and Meredith (Tew) for that."

Carroll's biggest concern Saturday will be pushing the ball up the floor against Thomasville's press and trying to control the tempo .

"We expect a very fast-paced game," Carroll said. "They have a man-to-man press and they push the ball. We'll try to slow them down in the halfcourt offense. If we don't, they'll run and run."

If Carroll needed a test to get ready for Thomasville, she got it in the regional semifinals when Midway beat Roanoke.

Roanoke was led by Deborah Cherry, who has set national high school records this season for steals.

Denning said Cherry didn't swipe the ball from Carroll once.

"There's no telling how valuable her ballhandling was," Denning said. "Cherry's the real deal on defense. We handled the ball well against her."

If Midway has an advantage , it could be the fact that Carroll and many of her teammates have been frequent visitors to the Smith Center for team basketball camp in the summer.

"I don't think we'll be quite as nervous," she said. "We'll be used to that environment. It won't be totally new." Carroll said Denning hadn't shared much with the team about his last trip to the state finals, which occurred in 1992 when his Midway team lost to Hayesville.

"He said it's been 10 years since he was there," Carroll said. "He wants to win because he said it might take another 10 years to get back and he doesn't know how much longer he's going to coach."

Carroll said there's one thing she won't do that one of the players from 1992 tried.

"His point guard, Kim Williams, dyed her hair red (for the title game)," Carroll said.

"Coach Denning's wife called me and told me to make sure and not dye my hair red."

Carroll's other real concern is getting enough sleep .

"We're really not morning people," she said. "We've all decided to try and be in bed at least by 10. We're going to meet at 7:30 Saturday and Coach Denning is going to buy us a ham biscuit." (Fayetteville Observer, 3/14/02)

MAR 2002 News & Record: FEAR WON'T BE A FACTOR IN STATE CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES (3/11/2002)

http://www.greensboro.com/fear-won-t-be-a-factor-in-state-championship-games/article_be3bedd3-27a1-5695-8ee3-3ad0b16d1baf.html

...NOTHING TO HIDE: Midway coach Tony Denning and Thomasville coach Eric Rader took a lot of the detective work out of this week by both bringing tapes of their regional championships to exchange at Monday's press conference.

"We realized we don't have to spy on each other," said Denning, sharing a table and a chat with Rader.

"If you can't be friends with the other coaches, you ain't got no friends," Rader said.

What both men see on the tapes is likely very similar to what they see in their own teams. Both squads can go very deep and like to run and press. They'll see it in person at the Smith Center Saturday.

MAR 2002 News & Record: THOMASVILLE READY FOR MORNING RUN\ THE RUN-AND-GUN BULLDOGS PLAY FOR THE SCHOOL'S FIRST GIRLS BASKETBALL STATE TITLE. (3/15/2002)

http://www.greensboro.com/thomasville-ready-for-morning-run-the-run-and-gun-bulldogs/article_48d16dc5-c805-5874-8b05-3d204cf7d98b.html

Thomasville girls basketball coach Eric Rader is soft-spoken and patient.

Off the court, that is. He sat and chatted with the opposing coach just days before they were to face off in the biggest game of his career. He even brought along a game tape to exchange.

But don't get the wrong idea.

At practice in the Thomasville gym days later, Rader's eyes narrowed with intensity. When he wasn't blowing the shrill whistle that hung around his neck, he was barking at the Bulldogs to go hard.

They responded.

Thomasville will be up and ready for its first turn in the 1-A state championship against Dunn Midway - even with an 11 a.m. tip - today at the Smith Center in Chapel Hill.

``This week has been really hard,' senior guard Luvinnia Flowers said. ``That was one of the most intense practices ever. In the end, though, it should pay off.'

``If we play like we practice,' senior forward Sheena Harriott said, ``we should be OK.'

The Bulldogs (27-3) need to be ready. Their game could be a barnburner.

Midway coach Tony Denning and Rader have similar approaches for their squads: press, run, go.

``People have tried to slow our pace down,' Rader said. ``We won't have to play a certain style (today) because their team will be similar to ours. We'll just go and play instead of worrying if someone's going to slow it down. It should be a really good game.'

Both teams also go deep into the bench. Thomasville has seven players averaging six points or more, and 10 of 12 Raiders scored in the regional finals last week.

Each Bulldogs player has received a copy of a detailed scouting report Rader put together from the game tape Denning also willingly exchanged...

MAR 2002 News & Record: THOMASVILLE RUNS TO TITLE (3/16/2002)

http://www.greensboro.com/thomasville-runs-to-title/article_83ad35ca-4554-59e2-b303-eaf0eb32aec3.html

Thomasville 69, Midway 44

``Set the pace. Set the pace.'The Thomasville girls remind each other of it before every game.

But they don't just set it. They crank it up to a frantic, helter-skelter, havoc-filled, breathless 32-minute race.

A race nobody wins but the Bulldogs.

They won the school's first girls basketball state championship Saturday, sprinting away from Dunn Midway 69-44 in the 1-A title game at the Smith Center in Chapel Hill.

With one minute left and the substitutes in the game, some of the Bulldogs on the bench locked arms and swayed back and forth, enjoying the moment. When time expired, the mad rush to midcourt was on. The team and cheerleaders huddled in a circle and ``woof, woofed' together.

As the players had medals hung around their necks, coach Eric Rader made sure to get a hug and a few words from each one.

``It's nice that we're the first to win it,' said a dazed Maya Ray, the junior point guard who scored 10 points. ``I'm overwhelmed and really happy. But it's like I'm not sure right now.'

Erin Crowder, a 6-foot sophomore forward, scored 19 points to lead the Bulldogs and was named the game's most valuable player.

With Crowder's help, Thomasville never trailed and thoroughly introduced the Raiders to what ``running' really means. Midway came into the game willing to run with the Bulldogs (28-3). But they couldn't keep up.

They could hardly keep the ball.

The Raiders (23-4) turned it over 36 times - 23 before halftime - against Thomasville's man-to-man pressure defense.

And as soon as the ball was loose, the Bulldogs were pushing it ahead for easy baskets.

Thomasville did not hit a 3-pointer in the game, scoring most of its points on layups.

``That's an indication of what we've been doing all year when we've been playing well,' Rader said.

Thomasville used the turnovers, and some easy baskets inside from Crowder, during a 16-2 run. Midway hit just one field goal in the first quarter, and Thomasville led 39-19 at halftime.

Sophomore guard Brittany Marsh, who scored 16 points, helped open up the game by coming off the bench and nabbing a few of her eight steals.

``Steals are her forte,' Rader said. ``We like the idea of bringing our quickest player off the bench. Just when you think it's fast, we're going to crank it up a little bit more.'

Marsh, Ray and freshman Tyronnica Alford took turns focusing on the Raiders' point guard and leading scorer, Brittany Carroll. Whoever was the most rested from the bench would take their turn harassing her. She finished with 16 turnovers and 19 points.

With six minutes left in the first half, Carroll looked exhausted. Midway coach Tony Denning called a timeout just so his team could get a blow.

``We were screening for each other, but they would always recover,' Carroll said. ``They recover faster than any team I've ever seen before. No matter what we did, we could never get free.'

Thomasville's lead ballooned to 22 points in the third quarter. But the Raiders made a run, led by Carroll and 6-2 center Jennifer Honeycutt, who finished with 15 points and 10 rebounds.

An 8-0 spurt cut the lead to 11 with 6:20 left.

``Even then, it was OK,' said Thomasville senior Sheena Harriott, who scored 10 points and grabbed nine rebounds. ``We still had the game.'

True. Marsh and Harriott keyed a 10-0 run, and the Bulldogs were back in command.

``(My teammates) did what I wanted,' Harriott said. ``They sent me out real nice.'

MAR 2002 Loses State Championship

Thomasville made the most of its first appearance in a state championship game.

Erin Crowder scored 19 points while Brittany Marsh had 16 as the Lady Bulldogs beat Midway 69-44 Saturday for the North Carolina High School Athletic Association Class 1-A championship.

Thomasville (28-3) jumped to a 20-point halftime lead and never let the Lady Raiders (23-4) cut the lead below double figures thanks to an opportunistic fast-break offense and an aggressive fullcourt press that forced 36 turnovers.

"We have a pregame thing where we say, 'Set the tone,'" coach Eric Rader said. "That's what we tried to do."

Crowder was named the game's Most Outstanding Player for the Bulldogs, while Sheena Harriott and Maya Ray each added 10 points. Thomasville ends the season with an 11-game winning streak.

The Bulldogs took charge with a 14-5 run midway through the second quarter, taking a 35-13 lead on a layup by Crowder with 1:57 to play. They pushed the lead to as many as 24 before going into intermission with a 39-19 edge.

"We knew we had to come out aggressive," Crowder said. "If we don't, we can't get into our rhythm."

Thomasville kept the pedal pressed to the floor for much of the game, rebounding missed Midway shots and turning them into fast-break opportunities with long outlet passes. The Bulldogs also harassed Midway point guard Brittany Carroll into 16 turnovers.

"We've never played anybody with that kind of speed, and it kind of stunned us," Carroll said.

The Raiders, who came into the game with its own 11-game winning streak, fought back in the second half, clawing to within 51-40 on two free throws from Carroll with 6:20 to play. They would get no closer.

"I thought we made a couple of good runs in the third quarter," coach Tony Denning said. "But every time we did, their girls had an answer."

Thomasville shot 41 percent while holding Midway to 28 percent. The Bulldogs managed 27 steals in the game. Marsh had eight, while Kendra Rutledge and Tyrommica Alford each had five.

Carroll led Midway with 19 points, while Jennifer Honeycutt had 15 points and 10 rebounds. (AP, 3/16/02)

MAR 2002 *Coach Of The Year Candidate*

TONY DENNING, Midway - Led team to 23-4 record and Class 1-A Eastern Regional championship. Had led Midway to state playoffs for 17 straight years and the 1992 regional title. (AP, 3/29/02)

2004**MAY 2004 NC Preps: East-West Basketball and Soccer Rosters (5/29/2004)**

<https://ncpreps.rivals.com/news/east-west-basketball-and-soccer-rosters>

Women's Basketball

Three All-State players will compete in the women's basketball game. Fayetteville Seventy-first High's LaToya Pringle, the AP Player of the Year and a UNC Chapel Hill signee, will lead the East team. She will be joined by Laney High's Tamera Young, a James Madison University signee, Karlyle Lim of East Chapel Hill High and a University of Pittsburgh signee, and Nicole Days of Pender High and a ECU signee.

Fellow All-State selections Ashton Barton of Rosman High and a UNC Asheville signee and Erin Crowder of Thomasville High will lead the West. Joining them will be Adrienne Bradshaw of High Point Central High and a Clemson signee, and Vatai Smith of Dudley High and a Georgia State University signee.

Head coach Tony Denning of Midway High will lead the East team, and head coach Tony Byrum of Monroe High will lead the West. The East won last year's contest and leads the all-time series 16-13.

JUL 2004 NC Preps: Meet the coaches - East-West basketball mentors (7/15/2004)

<https://ncpreps.rivals.com/news/meet-the-coaches-east-west-basketball-mentors>

Women's Basketball

East

Tony Denning

East head coach is 330-134 in 18 seasons at Midway High...team was 20-7 last season, winning conference regular season and tournament titles...his teams have won 9 conference regular season titles and 7 conference tournament titles and have made 18 state playoff appearances...3 times named Super Six Coach of the Year...6 times named Carolina Conference Coach of the Year...1995 Cape Fear Region Coach of the Year...also served as an assistant coach and defensive coordinator for Midway High since 1986...native of Clinton, NC...1971 graduate of Lakewood High where he played football, baseball and basketball...1979 graduate of UNC...says "The biggest honor I've had was being selected as the all-star coach for this summer."

JUL 2004 News & Record: SPEED AND POWER RULE EAST'S QUICK TRANSITION GAME KEYS GIRLS VICTORY (7/19/2004)

http://www.greensboro.com/speed-and-power-rule-east-s-quick-transition-game-keys/article_49df6b72-b085-5e37-ab3d-ad73662286d2.html

East girls 85 West girls 71\ Speed and an MVP performance by Tamera Young helped the East defeat the West 85-71 in Monday night's girls all-star basketball game at the Greensboro Coliseum.

"I feel that I played hard and aggressive," Young said. "The more that I played I got better and better." Young, a guard/forward who played at Wilmington Laney, was named the game's MVP following a 29-point performance. She will play at James Madison next season.

"Yeah, it makes me feel good but I didn't think I'd get it from the beginning," Young said. Young was 13-of-24 from the field with three 3-pointers. She scored 17 points in the second half.

"She didn't just play well tonight," said Tony Denning, head coach for the East. "She played well in every practice."

From the beginning, the East looked like the quicker team. The East guards pushed the ball up the court for the entire game.

"I think it was speed," Denning said. "I think our speed was the deciding factor."

The East showcased a strong transition game.

"We stayed with them in the first half," said Tony Byrum, head coach for the West. "I knew it was going to be a problem to match up with the speed they had."

One of the reasons the West was able to keep the game close in the first half was Tiffany Brown, a point guard who attended Parkwood and will play at Georgia Southern next season.

"I think I played well," Brown said. "I practiced hard and I brought it out today."

With less than five minutes left in the second quarter, Brown made a 3-pointer and drilled two free throws to make the score 32-30. Brown scored 23 points and had five 3-pointers.

"When I came out and hit the first one I said, 'I'm going to keep shooting them,' and they kept going in," Brown said.

The East led by as many as 17 points in the third and carried that momentum in the fourth. Young added nine more points in the fourth to help seal the victory.

"James Madison is fortunate to get her," Denning said. "I have nothing but the highest regard for her."

JUL 2004 Coach in All-Star Game

Significant playing time won't be a problem for three area girls in the annual East-West High School all-star basketball game today at 6:30 p.m. in the Greensboro Coliseum.

Laney's Tamera Young, Pender's Nicole Days and North Brunswick's Ashley Pellom could play vital roles for the East because of injuries and illness.

Pellom, especially, has become more valuable than when Midway's Tony Denning, the coach for the East, chose her.

A 5-foot-7 guard who has signed with Western Carolina University, Pellom might play virtually the entire game at the point.

That's because the other point guard, Karyle Lim of East Chapel Hill, suffered a broken finger during drills while in summer school at the University Pittsburgh.

"That's going to make Ashley Pellom's load a little heavier," Denning said.

Young, a 6-1 guard who has signed with James Madison, is the second tallest player on the squad. Denning indicated she might have to play inside and outside because of the status of Latoya Pringle, a 6-3 center from Fayetteville Seventy-First.

Pringle, who has signed with North Carolina, has barely worked out this summer because of anemia.

"It will be a wait and see on how much she plays," Denning said. "Because of that, we are going to call on the versatility of Tamera to likely play one than one position."

Days, a 6-0 forward who signed with East Carolina, likely will play more than expected. She is coming off a senior season in which she averaged 20.6 points, 15 rebounds, 3.2 assists, 2.4 steals and 1.6 blocks per game.

"Days is a solid inside player," Denning said. "Because of the uncertainty of just much how much and how well Pringle will play, she become even more important."

Denning replaced Lim with Alison Blackmon, a 5-9 combination guard from South Johnston. Blackmon has signed with Greensboro College.

The coach had planned to pair Pellom with Union's Chevon Keith (Western Carolina recruit) in the backcourt, but Keith suffered a torn anterior cruciate ligament during the summer. (Wilmington Star News, 7/19/04)

2007

JUN 2007 Parents Upset Over Denning Transfer to New School

He has been a mainstay as an educator, coach and friend in the Midway community for 22 years, but as of next year, Tony Denning will be transferred to Hobbton High School, effective when school starts back for the 2007-08 year on Aug.20.

According to reports, the English 2 teacher was told Monday afternoon by superintendent Dr. Stewart Hobbs that he would be moved to the Newton Grove school. There was no mention of the transfer at Monday's Board of Education meeting because it is at the discretion of the superintendent to make transfers as he sees fit- transfers in the school system does not need to be brought before the board.

So why the unexpected move? Denning isn't talking. When contacted Tuesday morning, he said simply, "no comment."

Carolyn Royal, assistant superintendent of personnel for Sampson County Schools, confirmed Denning's transfer Tuesday afternoon - he will replace current English teacher Jeffrey Peake at HHS, who will be teaching in another county.

Parents of children at Midway High School say it is a much different issue than a "needed" move. Denning has been an educator at Midway High School for the past 21 years.

"It is personal," said one parent, who did not wish to be identified for this story. "I have three children that have been raised in the Midway District, and I have had nothing but good things to say about Mr. Denning. A man has been at Midway High School that long and then all of sudden he is moved for no reason? I don't get it. As far I am know, he has never been approached about anything ... Then Monday he is told that he will be transferring - it is not right."

While the move is not a popular one to some, it most definitely a needed one, says Hobbs.

"As superintendent, I represent every child and every school in Sampson County," he said. "Myself and the Board of Education - we have to look at the bigger picture on everything. We had a need for two strong English teachers at Hobbton High School and we felt like Mr. Denning's move would be in the best interest of the students, the school and to Mr. Denning. The move also gives him the opportunity to coach if he wants to."

Hobbs says that he realizes the move is not a popular one, but he feels that it will be for the "betterment" of all parties involved.

"These moves are not done on the spur of the moment," he said. "This is discussed in depth with people involved, principals at the school as well as others. It is not like I just go and transfer people because I feel like it; I am looking at the big picture on this - I have to. Not everyone is going to like the change, but my job is to give every student in this school system the best educational opportunity and I feel like this move will be not only a plus for the school system and the students, but for Mr. Denning as well."

To prove his point, Hobbs discussed his principal transfers last year.

"It wasn't popular at all - some of them were not happy with it and there were some concerns," he said. "But, there were moves that were made because of the bigger picture. All of those moves turned out to be positive ones for everyone involved. You know, we have to make the tough decisions and not all of them are popular ones. But we have to look at everything involved. There are some things that I can not discuss with you because they are personnel issues, but the fact is, every move is made in the best interest of this school system, there is nothing that we do because it is personal." (Sampson Independent, 6/13/07)

JUL 2007 Accepts Teaching/Coaching Position at New High School

Former Midway High School Girls Basketball coach Tony Denning has accepted the vacant girls basketball head coaching position at Douglas Byrd High School in Fayetteville. The announcement was made Friday, July 6 by Byrd Athletic Director Troy Lindsey.

"We got a great teacher, an established and consistently good coach," stated Lindsey. "He has coached 21 years and has 13 conference championships."

Denning had been reassigned from Midway to rival Hobbton High School to teach English with no coaching responsibilities. This did not sit too well with Denning but Denning declined to comment on the reasons for his transfer.

"It was certainly not my desire to leave Midway High School," Denning said. "Douglas Byrd is going to be a good situation and that's where I'm directing all my energies. I am trying to stay positive and do a good job at Byrd and not worrying so much about the things that have been done to me. I'm so thankful that Byrd was interested in me."

"I had some other opportunities, but I didn't have another principal or athletic director to make me feel more needed or wanted. This feels so good after what I've been through, even though I don't want to come across harsh toward any one."

While coaching girls basketball at Midway, Denning had 391 career wins and was one of the most successful coaches in the county. He led the Lady Raiders to the state 1-A championship game twice.

In addition to his coaching responsibilities at Douglas Byrd, Denning will also be teaching English II. (Sampson Independent, 7/11/07)

NOV 2007 Profile

On a good day, **Tony Denning's** drive to work is 45 minutes. Tack on another 10 if there's road construction or congested traffic.

It used to take him less than two minutes to get to work -- but that was when he was still the girls' basketball coach at 1-A Midway High School.

Accustomed to a rural setting in Spivey's Corner, where the only noise outside the classroom is tractor-trailers hauling produce up and down U.S. 421, Denning now finds himself at Douglas Byrd. It's a 4-A school in the heart of Fayetteville, surrounded by towering pines, middle-class brick homes and Cape Fear Valley Medical Center.

He's making that commute because of what he calls the politics of the educational system.

A winner of 391 games who twice took the Raiders to the state championship game, Denning received what he perceived as a pink slip in June. He was told he was being reassigned within Sampson County to Hobbton High School as an English teacher, and with no coaching duties.

"I didn't ever intend to leave Midway. I had planned to work there until I retired," Denning said. "But a few selfish individuals were not going to let that happen, and I was not going somewhere I was not allowed to coach.

"I'm only 50 years old. I'm not ready to retire from coaching. There are a lot of us that teach so that we can coach, and in order to coach, I had to go outside of Sampson County."

The same day he got the news of his transfer, the Byrd job came open. Jonathan Grimes, who coached the Eagles for the past two seasons, was shifting to the boys' program, and that created a vacancy Denning immediately pursued.

He inherits a team that went 12-14 last year. The Eagles, led by Mid-Southeastern 4-A Conference Player of the Year Amanda Owens, handed regular-season champion Westover one of its three losses of the 2006-07 season.

Owens, who led the conference in scoring at 21.8 points per game, now plays at Fayetteville State. So, in a sense, Denning is starting all over -- a new school, girls he hasn't watched mature as middle school players, and a long drive to begin and end each day.

"I've had a couple of the girls tell me that they depended a little too much on their seniors last year, and now they understand the importance of all of them contributing," Denning said. "They said they were guilty at times last year of sitting back and watching Owens and being in awe. On nights when she was hot, like when they beat Westover, it worked. But on nights when she may not have had her most outstanding game, they were not prepared to contribute like they wish they had been."

One of those girls, senior Alisia Samuels, said the change in coaches has gone smoothly so far.

"Other than sounding a little bit more country, there's not much difference between him and Coach Grimes," she said.

That's part of the transition process for a coach when changing schools, Denning said. He'll be more vocal and direct with his players down the road, and in the long run -- based on his track record -- it'll be to the players' benefit.

"I've probably given some people that may not have deserved a lot of rope more rope than I should've," he said. "But until I know for sure all their motivations and justifications, I want to err on the side of doing unto others as I'd have them do to me, so I've been more lenient here than I've been in a lot of years.

"After I get to know them and understand where they're coming from and why they do things, then I'll be able to maybe be stricter as necessary.

"But the girls, especially the senior class of girls, are just as nice as they can be. They seem highly motivated to have a good season."

So is he. Success will make the commute back and forth from Spivey's Corner each day that much easier to stomach. (Fayetteville Observer, 11/11/07)

2008

JAN 2008 400th Career Victory as Coach

Douglas Byrd rallied from a two-point halftime deficit to give coach **Tony Denning** his 400th career victory, beating Richmond Senior 49-41 in a Mid-Southeastern Conference matchup Tuesday.

The Eagles defense held Richmond Senior to six third-quarter points on their way to the win.

Douglas Byrd (9-5, 3-1) was led by senior Alisa Samuels' 20 points and six assists. Teris Wolfe grabbed 14 rebounds and Jordan Jones had 12 rebounds for the Eagles.

Richmond Senior dropped to 8-5, 2-2. Douglas Byrd 49, Richmond Senior 41 (Fayetteville Observer, 1/9/08)

MAR 2008 School Board Candidate Running Over Denning Transfer/Removal

Although he never thought he would want to do it, Sampson County native Brant Blackburn has thrown his hat into the ring for a seat on the Sampson County Board of Education. Why?

Over the last couple of years, Blackburn said he has seen things within the school system that didn't make too much sense and those issues really made him want to try and make a change.

"Well there have been a couple of decisions that have been made over the last couple of years that really kind of spurred me to run," the 1990 Midway High School graduate said.

"The first one was when they decided to move seven principals (all at the same time) all over the county a while back - I never really felt like we got a straight answer from them about that decision I give you a perfect example, when Mr. Tim Lee was moved, there were over 100 parents at that meeting, I was one of them. We never really got a chance to voice our opinion, it was like our opinion didn't matter. To me, that was just wrong. I know that the superintendent has the authority to move personnel without the approval of the board, but I sincerely hope that the new superintendent will give the board some input and a way to voice their opinion before a decision like that is made."

Another reason Blackburn, a 35-year-old senior project manager with Todd Construction (Ft. Bragg), decided to run was that he saw a former teacher, who devoted years of service to the system, moved from the school where he taught, in his opinion, for no reason.

"That is the second reason why I am running," he said. "I feel that the board made a huge mistake was when Mr. Tony Denning was moved from Midway High School. He was a basketball coach and English teacher for years, in fact, he was my teacher in the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth grade. He was probably one of the best educators that I ever had - I can site specific examples from my sophomore and junior year in college where I referred back to his teachings that I benefited from. It is obvious - when you have someone in your school system who can make the kind of impact that is going to last years, years and years, you don't get rid of them. To my knowledge, we never got an explanation on just why he was moved and now, the county has lost him. To me, it was just wrong." (Sampson Independent, 3/30/08)

AUG 2008 News & Record: Longtime Triad basketball coach to lead West boys (8/7/2008)

http://www.greensboro.com/sports/longtime-triad-basketball-coach-to-lead-west-boys/article_a5d1d6cb-a968-5468-b182-9831b5d0b68e.html

Coaches for the North Carolina Coaches Association East-West All-Star basketball games were announced. The games will be played July 20, 2009, at the Greensboro Coliseum. Longtime Triad coach Howard West of Winston-Salem Reagan will pilot the West boys. Greg McKenzie of East Rowan will be his assistant. David Dewey of South Johnston will lead the East boys. Todd Edge of Fayetteville Byrd will serve as his assistant.

The girls coaches are head coach Ken Beatty of Forestview and Jeff Parham of South Caldwell for the West girls, and head coach Jamie Willoughby of Tarboro and E. Lewis Cummings of Western Harnett for the East girls.

Coaches for the Carolinas All-Star Classic (date to be announced) were also set. Head coach Reggie Peace of Lee County and John Harder of Morehead will lead the boys. Head coach M. Tony Denning of Fayetteville Byrd and Cissy Dyer of Murphy will lead the girls.

2010

MAY 2010 *Retires From Coaching*

Douglas Byrd named new coaches in boys' and girls' basketball Monday, replacing a pair of veteran coaches who are stepping down.

Phil Hart, former head coach at Westover and Pine Forest High Schools, will take over the boys' program from Todd Edge. Brandon Kimble, who is currently working at Knightdale High School in Wake County, will replace **Tony Denning** as coach of the girls' team.

The announcement was made Monday by Byrd athletic director Troy Lindsey.

More time with family

Denning became Byrd's girls' coach in 2007 after a highly successful career at Midway High School in Sampson County.

Now that Denning's daughter has finished high school, Lindsey said Denning was looking to get out of coaching and spend more time with his family.

Kimble, the new girls' coach, served as an assistant with the boys' program at Knightdale but has coached girls' basketball before. "He's energetic, a well-spoken young man," Lindsey said. "He's got some family connections to the Fayetteville area.

"He knows the history of the competitive girls' basketball here and he's real excited about coming aboard."

Lindsey said both coaches would most likely begin work officially sometime in July or August, once their contracts at their current schools had expired. (Fayetteville Observer, 5/18/10)

2015

JULY 2017 Sampson Independent: Crimewatch (7/9/2015)

<https://clintonnc.com/news/crime/1876/crimewatch-47>

Incidents/investigations

July 8 — Martin A. Denning of Fayetteville was the victim of larceny which occurred at on Plain View Highway, Dunn. The items stolen included refrigerator, dresser, antique cigarette dispenser, antiques gas pump, freezer, water pump, stove, tile from floor, carpet of bedrooms, wall of bedrooms and living room, broken windows and a 1979 truck. The property was valued at more than \$13,000

2017

DEC 2017 Announces House Candidacy

A Sampson native who educated students in multiple counties for more than three decades is seeking to represent the people at the state level, with specific goals of spurring economic growth and looking out for teachers. He also had choice words for a midterm party swap move by his potential opponent.

On Monday, **Martin (Tony) Denning** officially announced his candidacy as a Democratic candidate for N.C. House District 22, which consists of most of Sampson and Bladen counties and a small portion of Johnston.

Denning currently resides in Bladen County but is a native Sampsonian, graduating from Lakewood High School in 1975, from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1979 and completing post-graduate work at Fayetteville State. Denning is married to wife Kim Daughtry Denning and they have two adult children, daughter Marilee and son Kenan.

"It has been my pleasure to serve as an educator in Sampson, Bladen and Cumberland counties for over 30 years," said Denning. "For most of those years, I also served as women's basketball coach and football coach at the high school level."

While Denning concedes that the cares and concerns of the citizens of District 22 likely reflect those of many North Carolinians, he has as his goal to bring specific development and growth to the area.

"District 22 has fallen behind other areas of our state in economic growth, infrastructure improvements and educational resources due to, among other reasons, a lack of vision and action by our current representation," said Denning.

If elected to the N.C. House, Denning said he will work to secure the completion of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline in an environmentally safe way so some of that economic development can be realized in southeastern North Carolina.

The natural gas pipeline, a 42-inch line extending for roughly 600 miles between West Virginia and eastern North Carolina, has been in the works for more than four years now. Its construction can be accomplished while protecting the environment and being "an engine to spur economic growth," Denning attested.

The longtime teacher said he will also strive to secure benefits and retirement programs for educators and provide adequate and responsible compensation packages to keep experienced teachers in this state. He wants to see that incentives, including the N.C. Teaching Fellows Program, are extended to prospective teachers and competitive starting salaries are offered to new ones.

"I will also address criminal justice issues and seek to keep partisan politics out of the process for electing judges. I will work with local law enforcement agencies to help secure the resources they need to serve and protect our communities," Denning said. "I will challenge any attempt to make our courts a partisan controlled system that potentially limits our citizens access to a fair and equitable legal system."

"Political gerrymandering has negatively impacted our Legislature," he continued. "We dare not let that happen to our court system."

Denning was originally expected to make a public announcement on Tuesday in Roseboro, however due to the North Carolina Legislature and courts still determining the new district lines, that formal announcement was held off.

"The citizens of N.C. House District 22 deserve a representative who will speak for all of the people; work to provide economic and educational opportunities; promote the continual improvements of the infrastructure needs of District 22; and hold true to the promises made during the campaign," Denning stated.

The current District 22 N.C. Rep. William D. Brisson was elected unopposed in November 2016 for his sixth term in the House. That two-year term expires at the end of 2018.

Brisson announced his decision in October to change his political party affiliation from Democrat to Republican.

At the time, N.C. Democratic Party Chair Wayne Goodwin said the party switch did little to change anything as Brisson "rarely caucuses with Democrats and votes more than nine out of 10 times with the Republican majority."

Goodwin called District 22 the "reddest Democratic-held seat in North Carolina," consistently voting for Republican national candidates and has "gotten more conservative over time." In 2012, the district voted 56 percent to 44 percent for Mitt Romney. In 2016, the district voted 59 percent to 40 percent in favor of Donald Trump.

"Our party remains committed to fighting for every seat possible in order to retake the majority by 2020," Goodwin noted in October. "Under fairer maps in 2018, we are confident we will break the Republican supermajority."

Upon the announcement of his party switch, Brisson shook off any notion that the move was about "partisan politics."

"This step is about getting things done for House District 22," he said then. "As an admitted conservative, I cannot continue to be part of today's liberal Democrat Party."

Denning eschewed the idea of party politics and pandering, chiding the party swap move.

"I am a conservative Democrat. I will address every issue on the merits of the law and not to follow in lockstep with any political party. However, I will not abandon a party label in the middle of an elected term to 'fit in' to a party structure. garner partisan support or promote my own political future," Denning stated. "I seek the support of those within House (District) 22 who are not concerned about party politics, but concerned about the economic growth for the region and the prosperity of all of the citizens of House 22 and the state of North Carolina." (Sampson Independent, 12/12/17)

DEC 2017 Formal Statement of Candidacy

Today I am formally announcing my candidacy for the Democratic Primary for North Carolina House District 22. At present House District 22 is comprised of Bladen County and a portion of Sampson County. Currently the courts and the North Carolina Legislature are determining the final district lines for House 22.

I am a native of Sampson County and currently reside in Bladen County. In 1975 I graduated from Lakewood High School and I am a member of the Class of 1979 from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Additionally, I completed post-graduate work at Fayetteville State University.

It has been my pleasure to serve as an educator in Sampson, Bladen, and Cumberland counties for over thirty years. For most of those years I also served as women's basketball coach and football coach at the high school level.

I am married (wife, Kim Daughtry Denning) and have two adult children (daughter, Marilee and son, Kenan).

While the concerns of the citizens of N.C. House 22 reflect many of the same concerns of all North Carolinians, it is my desire to represent District 22 and work to bring specific development and growth to our area. District 22 has fallen behind other areas of our state in economic growth, infrastructure improvements, and educational resources due to, among other reasons, a lack of vision and action by our current representation.

As a member of the North Carolina House I will work to secure the completion of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline in an environmentally safe way to bring greater economic development to southeastern North Carolina. The ACP can be constructed in such a way as to protect the environment while also being an engine to spur economic growth.

I will also strive to secure the benefits and retirement programs for our educators and work to provide adequate and responsible compensation packages to keep our experienced teachers in state while also offering incentives, including the NC Teaching Fellows

Program, to prospective teachers and competitive starting salaries for new teachers.

As the representative for N.C. House 22 I will also address criminal justice issues and seek to keep partisan politics out of the process for electing judges. I will work with local law enforcement agencies to help secure the resources they need to serve and protect our communities. I will challenge any attempt to make our courts a partisan controlled system that potentially limits our citizens access to a fair and equitable legal system. Political gerrymandering has negatively impacted our legislature; we dare not let that happen to our court system.

The citizens of N.C. House District 22 deserve a representative who will speak for all of the people; work to provide economic and educational opportunities; promote the continual improvements of the infrastructure needs of District 22; and hold true to the promises made during the campaign.

I am a conservative Democrat. I will address every issue on the merits of the law and not to follow in lock step with any political party. However, I will not abandon a party label in the middle of an elected term to "fit in" to a party structure, garner partisan support, or promote my own political future.

I seek the support of those within House 22 who are not concerned about party politics but concerned about the economic growth for the region and the prosperity of all of the citizens of House 22 and the state of North Carolina. (Bladenonline.com. 12/12/17)

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