In remembrance of Jimmy Mattos

Jimmy Mattos thought.

He thought a lot.

He thought about ways to better our schools in the Easton area. He believed that all children should have access to the best facilities and tools for the best educational experience.

Back in the early 2000s while serving on the American Union Elementary School (AU) District Board, he realized that his little school couldn’t get projects done nor supplies needed in a timely manner, as larger school districts could.

He did some research and discovered that if American Union could become part of a larger district, they would get the things that they need, like a new science wing, a solar array or even upgrades to facilities.

He spoke to his board at American Union and realized that they, too, wanted the same improvements for the students and staff.

But how to accomplish this?

He did some research and found that smaller school districts that merged with other school districts saw the benefits of such a plan. He brought that idea back to the American Union board and sought permission to speak to members of the Washington Union High School (WUHS) District board.

Taken by surprise, the WUHS board listened intently to a proposal to unify with the smaller AU. After much discussion, both boards determined that both districts should become one, or unify.

The campaign to Unify had to go through several painstaking processes: Both boards had to approach all of the WUHS feeder schools’ boards to seek permission to unify. After that became accomplished, they mounted a campaign, both by phone, by mail, and door to door to collect signatures to get this initiative to qualify for the next available election by all voters.

Success!

Leading up to election day, both the WUHS and the AU boards, faculties, and classified staffs put together a compelling marketing campaign for unification.

The initiative won with a 70%+ approval of all voters in the area!

But his drive didn’t stop there.

When it was time to upgrade facilities, the new district needed to put together a bond initiative to raise funds to accomplish much needed improvements in the district.

Again … Great marketing and positive responses from the voters allowed the newly created Washington Unified School District (WUSD) the opportunity to have the necessary funds … the measure resoundingly passed.

Of all of the needed facility upgrades, the biggest and the most expensive, was the stadium.

The John Ventura Stadium was created in 1955 by John Ventura, an area farmer plus other farmers who, like Jimmy Mattos, felt that our students should have an outstanding athletic facility. Over its 65-year history, that stadium served the community for events like football games, track meets, the Easton Lions Club’s Harvest Carnival, the annual May Day, among many other events. Yet, the stadium was outdated and dangerous, with light poles held together by guy wires so that they wouldn’t fall during heavy winds.

Jimmy’s hand in the design of the new stadium was ingenious. Rather than having the snack bars and restrooms as stand-alone buildings, he recommended that the engineers put them underneath the bleachers. Additionally, the WUSD board recommended putting locker rooms and a weight room on the home side and locker rooms on the visitors’ side of the stadium, erasing the risk of both teams having to cross a street to use such facilities at the High School campus. This idea was costly, but, very well worth it.

Today, the new John Ventura Stadium plays host to, not only football games, track meets, carnivals and May Day, but it also serves as the home to WUHS’ Girls and Boys soccer teams and has hosted several regional and national band competitions!

We mourn the loss of a pioneer in Jimmy Mattos: One who became an integral part of unification to the Washington Unified School District and who had the foresight to create a school district and a community of which we can all feel proud!

Sincerely,

Washington Unified Board of Trustees