

Todd Sharp was into musical theater as a student at Floyd Central in the late 1980s when a favor request from his sister opened a door he never visioned himself walking through.

Since taking that step he has built two of the winningest dance programs in the country at both the high school and college levels.

The step didn't seem like that big a deal at the time, but 27 national championships later and Sharp can't help but smile when asked about how he got started..

Given Sharp's background in musical theater, his sister Melia Harvey, who was on the FC dance team, asked if he would work with her on few things.

Sharp obliged and one thing led to another and before he knew it he was the only coach of the Floyd Central High School dance team.

Then, one thing led to another, and the FC program began to have success, which got the attention of some higher ups at the University of Louisville.

A few years later Sharp was hired by the university to coach dance. A few years after that he was promoted to Head Coach and Spirit Coordinator at U of L. It's a position he has now held for 15 years.

In addition to his work with the Dazzlers and Ladybirds he coaches cheerleaders and mascots at the University of Louisville.

Sharp said he is often asked with all the success he has had, why he continues to coach at both FC and U of L. He answers with one word, "Loyalty."

He said because the school and the dancers at FC have always been loyal to him, he can't imagine not being part of that program.

With the two programs combined, Sharp has 27 National Championship rings, he will go looking for 28 when the Ladybirds travel to nationals in this month.

Over the past 15 years, no one who has ever danced for the U of L dance team has left the program without winning a national championship.

"We are proud of that," Sharp said. "With that (success), however, comes the pressure of wanting to maintain it."

One would think all of that success is what he is most proud of, but winning comes second.

Sharp said the biggest charge he gets as a coach is seeing young high school kids develop into responsible, successful adults.

". . . As amazing and accomplished as the (U of L and FC) teams are, one of my greatest joys in coaching is to see those girls by the time they are in their second or third year on the Louisville team, as adults," Sharp said. "They are adult women who are thriving in college, thriving in their internships. They are women who have developed a voice. I sit back and watch them make great decisions about career choices, great decisions about the men they allow in their lives. I Feel like my girls overall just make really great decisions and that's rewarding to see."

With that sense of accomplishment also comes some sadness.

One of the saddest days of the season is senior day.

"Parents have an emotional rollercoaster when their child goes to college or leaves the nest,"

Sharp said. "It's not on the same level as their parents, but working so close with them, I feel that pain every year. Saturday (March 9) was the last game in the Yum! Center for 11 of these girls and several in this group I had at Floyd Central, too. I love seeing them thrive and go on to the next chapter of their lives, but it hurts to lose them in your daily lives."

The mourning period doesn't last long as Sharp and the dancers he coaches quickly turn their attention to preparing for the next school year.

Sharp is in his 40s and said people are always asking him how long he plans to continue coaching.

"I always get that, but in what other sport do you ask a coach who isn't 50 if they play to retire," he said. "I still love every minute of it and as long as I do love it, I plan to continue coaching."

Like the dancers he coaches, Sharp gets a front row seat to watch the University of Louisville compete in all of their sports.

Prior to last week's NCAA men's basketball championship, Sharp said 2011-12 was one of his favorite seasons.

He said no one expected much from the men's basketball team that won the championship and danced all the way to the Final Four before falling to Kentucky.

That was followed by the Cardinal football team getting to New Orleans to play in the Sugar Bowl.

"It was a special year," Sharp said. "The basketball team had lost three out of four going into the Big East tournament. We were leaving for New York and everyone was telling us they'd see us back here after the first game. They won the tournament, then made the final four.

"Then to be in New Orleans with the football team, it was a very good time."

Sharp can't talk about his job without flashing a big smile and it's clear to see that he will continue to coach, have success and fill his jewelry box

"I have a passion! I love what I do!," he said. "Do I see myself coaching both teams 10 years from now? The honest answer is yes!"