

Having A Swell Time: Hosting the First NFL Regional Office and Director in Our District

by Steve Meadows, Danville HS, Kentucky District Chair

Swell.

That was the word for it when I discovered that Kentucky would host the first NFL Regional Office and that as the Kentucky District Chair, the new Regional Director would work closely with me.

As a longtime interp coach, I can tell you many ways to say that word:

Swell

(translation: *I'm delighted to have some help! Let's put on a show in my dad's barn while we're at it!.*)

Swell

(translation: *Great. Somebody else to have to work around to get anything done. Exactly what I need.*)

Swell

(translation: *Super. We must be in bad shape if we're the first to get the big helper. This is like being a Kentucky school in crisis. For God's sakes, Ripon, leave this child behind. Go pick on Randy or Jay.*)

I'm happy to say that none of these interpretations is correct. Having the Regional Office in your backyard is not some Mickey Rooney movie utopia, but it is not an impediment or a punishment either. In fact, it's great. As Tyler Billman's hometown colleague, I've enjoyed talking with him about how to implement Regional Office initiatives the first time they've ever been initiated, and that's been an honor as well as just plain interesting. The new District Coach of the Year awards, the coaching workshop, the mentoring program for new coaches – I've been in on all of those before they began. Being a sounding board for someone in a major position in an organization I love has been a great experience.

I've also been Laverne to Tyler's Shirley: sometimes, I've had to make his balloon land. *Tyler, that's a great idea, but people with no budgets and many papers to grade aren't going to do that. Help them cope with today first before they're ready for tomorrow.* To his credit, he's been good-natured about my occasional deflations of his ideas. In fact, his optimism never falters. I admire that, and since he's been here I feel better about the future of Kentucky NFL than I have in a long time.

Okay, by now you've seen my descriptions of possible problems, but what solutions does the Regional Office bring? Aside from my own joys in being part of NFL history, what will a Regional Office do for your district? Here's what it's done for ours:

- Persuaded five schools we didn't have before (or who had left us years ago) to affiliate.
- Offered a fine coaching workshop that was useful for old and new coaches alike.
- Raised awareness of NFL throughout the state.
- Provided opportunities for extra coaching for any school in driving distance of the office.
- Guaranteed some help securing judges (especially debate judges) and other swag for our District Tournament in late March.

You have to admit -- that's pretty swell.