

# Chippewa Valley community mourns death of young teacher Wouters

By Nicole Tuttle For The Macomb Daily  
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Chippewa Valley teacher and coach Nichole Wouters died Monday after battling cancer.  
Photo courtesy of Kari Drogosh

Cancer may have kept Nichole Wouters out of her classrooms in the Chippewa Valley Schools district more than she liked, but it never stopped her from teaching.

Wouters, 30, died Monday at Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak after a nearly 3-year battle against the disease. Chippewa Valley Schools Superintendent Ron Roberts said Wouters taught outside of the classrooms when she managed to share her brave and sometimes painful journey with the disease, including social media documentation.

"What is really brave about what she did is she really took us on her journey and she did it through social media," Roberts said Tuesday.

"She was very active on Twitter and posted both the ups and downs of her illness. And so she opened herself up so we could see what she was going through. It was important because we learned from that. So even though she was very ill and could not be in the classroom every day, she still was a teacher. While she was out dealing with an illness, she was still teaching."

Wouters, formerly from Warren, graduated from Dakota High School in Macomb Township in 2007.

According to her obituary, she earned a bachelor's degree in education from Wayne State University and achieved a Master's degree in educational technology from Central Michigan University.

Wouters taught at Chippewa Valley's Ninth Grade Center and Chippewa Valley High School, both in Clinton Township, since 2012.

She also coached volleyball at the district's Algonquin Middle School in Clinton Township until she became a varsity volleyball coach at Chippewa Valley High School in 2016.



Students at Chippewa Valley High School wore purple Tuesday in memory of teacher Nichole Wouters, who died Monday from cancer.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHIPPEWA VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

Wouters was 27 and teaching math at the Ninth Grade Center as well as coaching varsity volleyball when she learned she had cancer.

Her diagnosis of lung and brain cancer came Jan. 10, 2017. She was a non-smoker with no family history of lung or brain cancer. The next day, students began requesting to fundraise for her, which led to a Wouters Warriors campaign that sometimes included sales of T-shirts and bracelets to help her with medical expenses.

Roberts said that over the last few years, the district had an arrangement with Wouters that allowed her to return to the classroom to teach whenever she felt healthy enough.

“We put another person in Nichole’s classroom, so when Nichole was able to teach she could come in and teach with that teacher,” he said. “If her health deteriorated or became worse, if she left, we had another teacher always there. That is what Nichole wanted to do. She wanted to be in there teaching and with the kids, anytime she felt well enough for a period of time.”

When not able to teach in the classrooms, Wouters would visit the schools. Kari Drogosh, the high school's assistant principal, said Wouters was last present at the Ninth Grade Center on Sept. 6.

“She had come in a wheelchair to see the ninth grade when they make their commitment to graduate, on the 6th,” Drogosh said. “On Monday the 9th, she was admitted to the hospital.”

Drogosh was caught off guard by Wouters' death, due to this recent visit and posts Wouters had made on social media regarding treatments.

“She was never really one to complain or stay home regardless,” Drogosh said.

District spokesperson Diane Blain said high school counselors have been available for staff and students in need in the wake of Wouters' death. Students playing in a volleyball game this evening wore purple jerseys in remembrance of her while students wore Wouters Warriors shirts to school in her memory today. A moment of silence was also held in school.

Wouters' death marks the third time in recent months that the Chippewa Valley High School community has been affected by a cancer death, Drogosh said. Previously the school lost teacher Ellen Kinsley to cancer and student Anthony Verdezoto.

She is survived by her parents, Kenneth and Nancy Wouters; siblings, Christine (Christopher) Sapiano, Shelby Wouters (John Whitford), Madison (Jacob) Vymazal; numerous other relatives; and comfort dog, Gina.

A funeral service will be held at 10 a.m. Saturday at St. Paul of Tarsus Catholic Church, 41300 Romeo Plank Road, Clinton Township. Visitation is 2-9 p.m. Friday, with a 7 p.m. Celebration of Life, at D.S. Temrowski & Sons Funeral Home, 30009 Hoover Road (at Common Road), Warren.