

# Chippewa Valley teacher and coach, Wouters, dies at 30

*'Her lasting impact is immense'*

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**Wouters**

Photo provided by Chippewa Valley Schools





A coach and a teacher, Nichole Wouters was an inspiration and fighter until the very end to members of the Chippewa Valley School District.

Wouters died Sept. 16 after battling lung and brain cancer for 2 1/2 years. She was 30.

Wouters was a math teacher at Chippewa Valley's Ninth Grade Center and 10-12 Building since 2012. She took over the Big Reds' volleyball program as the varsity coach in 2016.

Chippewa Valley Assistant Principal Kari Drogosh knew there was something special about Wouters early on. Drogosh was Wouters' volleyball coach at Macomb Dakota, where she graduated in 2007.

"Even from when she was a student-athlete at Dakota, just her fight, spirit, her drive. We brought her up as a sophomore on varsity. She was always the first to volunteer, to step up when we needed her," Drogosh said. "Realistically, that carried over to the very end for her."

Wouters coached at Algonquin Middle School before making the jump to the varsity level for the Big Reds on short notice.

"Of course, there is some trepidation when you go from coaching middle school to varsity, but I told her that her knowledge and energy that she brings can surpass any amount of that fear," Drogosh remembered. "It takes years for a new coach to get a program in place. They were working toward that rebuilding process. ... She loved volleyball, and it showed to her players. 'If she can come even when she feels like crap, I'm going to be here every day.'

"She showed them that you never gave up."

After receiving her diagnosis in January of 2017, Wouters never shied away from her battle. She documented her challenges — the good and the bad — on various avenues of social media.

"I want to document everything. Even if it's just for me or for my family, to help one person out there who ends up going through this, I want to give them some comfort to be strong and be brave and fight through this," Wouters told *C & G Newspapers* shortly after her diagnosis. "If there's anything I can do while going through it, then that's what I'm going to do."

Chippewa Valley Superintendent Ron Roberts said the way Wouters handled her battle "with such dignity, such optimism and sense of humor, she was an inspiration to the entire community."

"I really think people became better people through being part of her journey," Roberts said. "It took an immense amount of bravery on her part to let people in on something so personal to her. She was only with us a short time, but her lasting impact is immense. We were lucky to know her."