

**MENOMINEE HIGH SCHOOL
ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME**

7TH ANNUAL INDUCTION CEREMONY



**Saturday, May 3, 2025
Pullman Center
Menominee, Michigan**

**Menominee High School
ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME INDUCTION CEREMONY**

INVOCATIONJohn Wills
OPENING REMARKSRandy Demeuse
MASTER OF CEREMONIESJohn Wills

The Blesch Family

Accepting on behalf of the Blesch family: Amber Polzin
Plaque Presenter: John Wills

Paul G. Christensen

Accepting on behalf of Mr. Christensen: Paul R. Christensen
Plaque Presenter: Randy Demeuse

Don Hofer

Plaque Presenter: Tom Kuber

Gordon Pekuri

Plaque Presenter: Bill Jones

Roger Pekuri

Plaque Presenter: Bill Jones

Bill Schwanz

Plaque Presenter: Mark Klatt

Jerry Derusha

Plaque Presenter: Madison Derusha

Joe Noha

Plaque Presenter: Josh Kellner

Bobby Anderson

Plaque Presenter: Tony Hofer

Boys' 1996-97 Cross Country Team

Plaque Presenter: Randy Verkerke

Girls' 1997-99 Cross Country Teams

Plaque Presenter: Randy Verkerke

Tracy Wills-Hall

Accepting the plaque on behalf of Ms Wills-Hall: Heidi Wills
Plaque Presenter: Kristen Schwanz

Menominee High School ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME

OFFICERS OF THE HALL OF FAME

Mr. Randy Demeuse	President
Mr. Owen Peterson	1st Vice President
Mr. Jamie Schomer	2nd Vice President
Mr. Sam Larson	3rd Vice President
Mr. John Wills	Secretary/Treasurer

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Mr. Justin BardowskiHigh School Principal
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Menominee High School Athletic Hall of Fame

Welcome to the 6th annual induction ceremony of the Menominee High School Hall of Fame. Conceived in late 2016, the idea of a hall of fame at our high school has been tossed around for many years, but in February of 2017, the MHS Hall of Fame was launched and before the year was out, the class of 2018 had been selected.

The categories for nomination, as established by the Board of Directors, include athletes, coaches, teams, and individuals providing meritorious service in the area of athletics.

The criteria are as follows:

ATHLETE:

A person may be nominated for induction in the category of athlete after a minimum of twenty (20) years have passed after graduation.

COACH:

A person may be nominated for induction in the category of coach after a minimum of five (5) years have passed since last coaching.

TEAM:

A team may be nominated for induction in the category of team after a minimum of twenty (20) years have passed after graduation.

MERITORIOUS SERVICE:

A person may be nominated for induction in the category of meritorious service at any time at the discretion of the Board of Directors and the Nomination/Selection Committee.

The formation of the Menominee High School Athletic Hall of Fame began in the fall of 2016 as an idea in the minds of Randy Demeuse and John Wills. Past attempts at creating a hall of fame were unsuccessful in part due to timing and circumstances, but this time everything came together as if it was meant to be.

In the early winter of 2017, the two met with high school officials and then the board of education to get their approval, which came swiftly and smoothly. A Board of Directors was formed which included Demeuse, Wills, Owen Peterson, Superintendent and High School Principal John Mans, and Athletic Director Jamie Schomer.

In the ensuing months, a Nomination/Selection Committee was formed with ready volunteers seeking to make the hall a reality. Nominations to the inaugural class of inductees were sought from both the committee and the public and by August a list was compiled. The committee voted in September, and by November 1 the first class had been selected.

2025 is no different than previous induction classes when it comes to greatness in the athletic arenas. From the family who provided funding for many of our civic structures, including a football field and an auditorium, a gentleman who was a standout lineman on one of the state's earliest championship football teams as well as a founder of a local golf club, an athlete of diminutive physical stature who excelled in every sport in which he competed, two brothers who defined the meaning of endurance and excellence both on the cross country course, the track, and also on skis, a student athlete who performed well on the football field as well as on the basketball court, coached seemingly every sport that the school and community had to offer, and taught in Menominee for 42 years, a football and basketball standout who took his skills to Michigan State and Northern Michigan University and later to the area of manufacturing which allowed him to donate money, time, and expertise to the school system, an athlete who can boast of being the best quarterback in school history, a prolific scorer on the basketball court, as well as a tennis player, returning to his alma mater to teach as well as help coach three state championship football teams and also serving as a basketball and tennis coach, a well-liked unsung manager for the football, basketball, and local baseball teams for over 40 years, the members of the Upper Peninsula State Championship Boys' and Girls' cross country teams of the late 1990s, and a member of the same girls' cross-country teams who also performed at a high level in track and field and went on to run national championships for four nationally ranked college cross country teams at Northern Michigan University, the class of 2025 indeed has its share in spades of talent, intelligence, and success in later life. Once again, Menominee High School has boasting rights tonight.

GUSTAVUS AND BERTHA BLESCH

Gustavus and Bertha Blesch were two of the most influential philanthropists in the Twin Cities area and the pair generously gave of their wealth to improve the lives of boys and girls throughout the area. Bertha was instrumental in founding the original DAR Boys and Girls Club in 1915 while the couple gave the city Blesch Field in 1920 and Blesch Auditorium, constructed as part of the high school addition in 1952. At the time, Blesch Field, now known as Blesch Stadium, was the most advanced of its time. Blesch Stadium has been home to Menominee High School football continuously for the past 126 years. It was named for the couple's son, Walton, who died at the age of 14 of cerebral meningitis.



PAUL G. CHRISTENSEN

An athlete, war veteran and inventor, Paul G. Christensen dabbled in a bit of everything that life had to offer. Christensen was a 1913 graduate of Menominee High School and a standout lineman and end for the Menominee Maroons football team from 1911-1913 serving as captain in 1913. The Maroons claimed the Michigan State High School Championship in 1912. Following a short term at the University of Illinois, where he also played football, Christensen entered World War I as a second lieutenant in the field artillery. An avid golfer, he was a founder and first president of the North Shore Golf Club. He also invented the NFL Championship Football board game that was produced by Lowell Toy Company back in 1964. The game was accepted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2017.

District championship. He was also an undefeated two-mile U.P. Champion in 1909. He spent one year at Mankato State, winning a conference championship in 1914. He was inducted into the Mankato State University Hall of Fame in 1981.



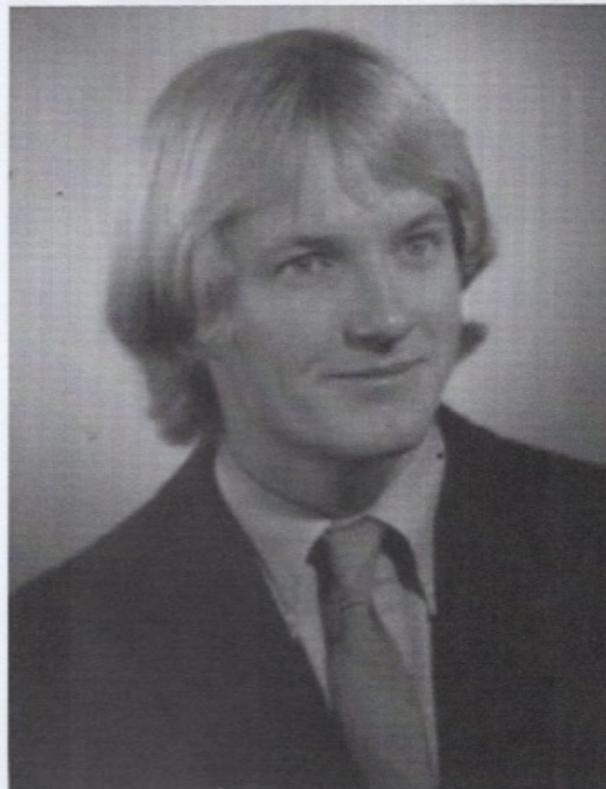
DON HOFER

A decorated three-sport athlete during his time at Menominee high School, Hofer was blessed with natural athleticism that made it seem as though every sport came easy to him. He was a three-year starter in football, playing running back his sophomore season before moving to quarterback for his junior and senior campaigns. He won All-Big Rivers Conference honors in 1957 and was a two-time All-U.P. selection. Hofer was also the second leading scorer on the basketball team in all three of his varsity seasons. A member of the Menominee High School track and field team, Hofer was its leading scorer in three of his four years, competing in the pole vault, high jump, and both the high and low hurdles. He won the Barbara Silverthorn award as the top student-athlete in 1958.



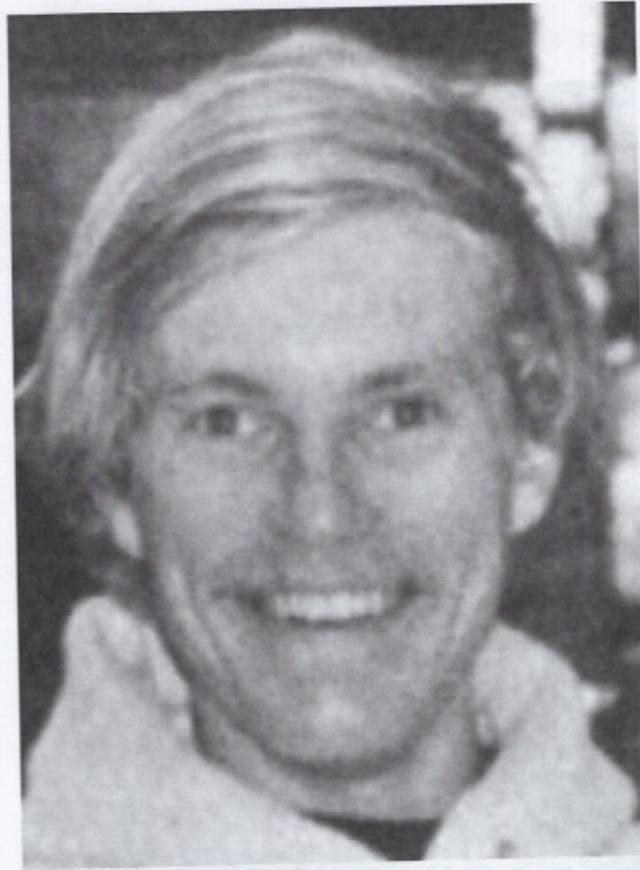
GORDON PEKURI

Gordon Pekuri spent only three years at Menominee High School, but he made sure to make each moment of them count. An individual who never seemed to tire, Pekuri composed an outstanding prep career where he won All-State accolades in both cross country and track and field. He was a two-time individual U.P. champion and two-time team U.P. champion in cross country (1966-67) helping the Maroons go undefeated in both years. He was a district, conference and All-U.P. choice. He also won the Muskegon Seaway Festival 10-mile festival race in 1968. He became the first U.P. runner to break the 10-minute barrier in 1968. Pekuri and his family moved to Ironwood for his senior year where he continued to distinguish himself as a member of the inaugural Red Devil Cross Country team as they won the U.P. District championship. He was also an undefeated two-mile U.P. Champion in 1969. He spent one year at Mankato State, winning a conference championship in 1969. He was inducted into the Mankato State University Hall of Fame in 2005.



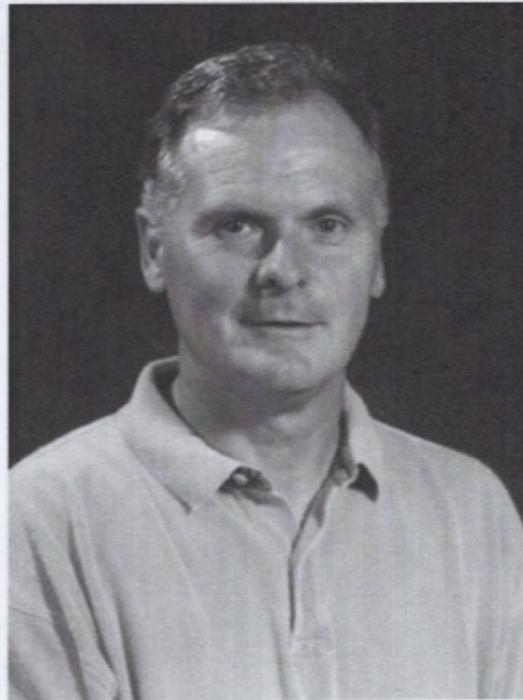
ROGER PEKURI

Pekuri, a 1968 graduate, is one of the most decorated endurance athletes in the history of Menominee High School, spending his junior and senior seasons as a member of the cross country and track and field teams. In cross country, Pekuri helped Menominee go undefeated in 1967, as well as a U.P. Finals championship in 1968 and a runner-up finish the year prior. He was also a key contributor to the Maroons' undefeated track and field season in 1968. He attended Michigan Tech University, where he competed in the NCAA National Championships in cross country in 1971 and 1972. He became an ardent cross-country skier while at MTU where he won every U.S. Ski Association race from 1971-72. He was inducted into the MTU Athletic Hall of Fame in 2022. His love of running and skiing continues to this day.



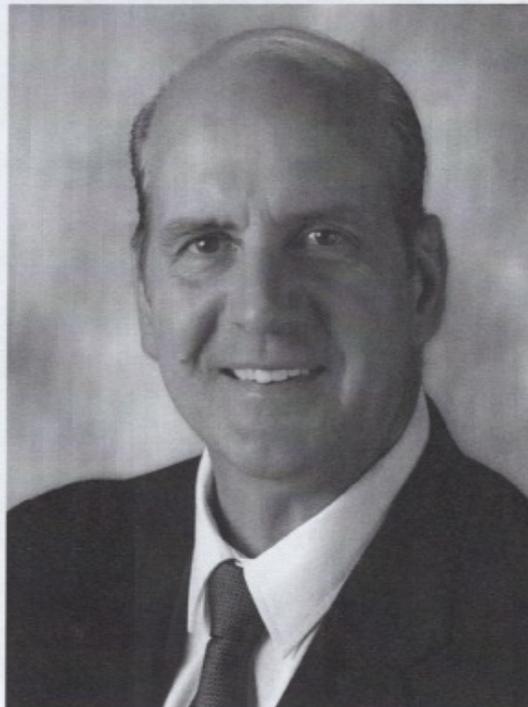
BILL SCHWANZ

Whether on the court or in the classroom, Bill Schwanz dedicated his life to shaping young men and women as both an educator and a coach. Schwanz taught at Menominee High School for 42 years and spent 45 years as a coach for numerous sports programs throughout the area. Schwanz began his teaching and coaching career in Coleman in 1968. In 1970 he came back to his hometown to teach and became a volunteer assistant for varsity coach Bob Krysiak. He coached freshman and junior varsity basketball before taking the reins of the varsity squad in 1984, winning a District title and regional championship the same year. In addition to basketball, he has coached football, baseball, and soccer. As a football coach, he was in charge of the freshman and J.V. programs. He also coached the 8th grade Hornets football team along with Mark Klatt for 9 years, capturing the Midwest Football Championships 6 of 9 years. He also coached at the Pop Warner level and headed the Menominee Rec Department's summer T-ball program and later softball. He also coached Little League, J.V. Legion Baseball, and M&M U-10 and U-12 youth softball.



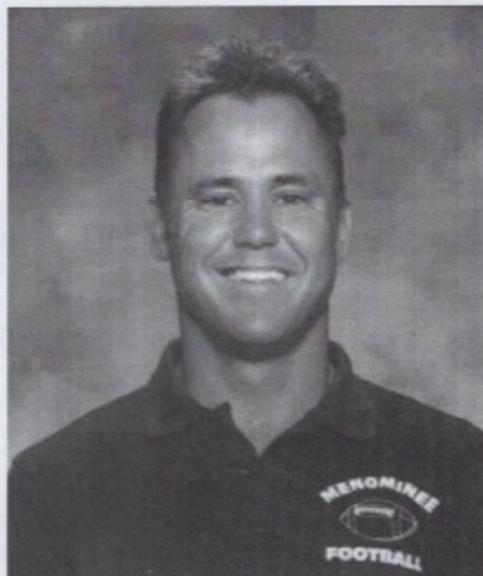
JERRY DERUSHA

Jerry Derusha's grit, intelligence and relentless work ethic propelled the 1981 graduate to success in every endeavor he pursued. As the center on the 1979-80 varsity football teams, he earned All-Conference and All-U.P. accolades and All-State honors as a senior. He made history as the first Maroon player selected to play in the Michigan East-West All-Star Game where he caught the attention of Michigan State coach Muddy Waters. This led to Derusha joining the Spartans as a long snapper. Beyond football, he excelled in track and field setting an MHS high jump record of 6' 4 ¼ feet, that stood until 1990. He is also an accomplished sailor competing in several regional and national competitions. After graduating from Northern Michigan University, he returned to Menominee in 1992 and took the helm of the M&M Hornets youth football Team. Under his leadership, the Hornets boasted 17 winning seasons in 18 years, securing 13 conference championships. While football has been his lifelong passion, he and his wife, Terri, have also made a lasting impression through major donations to Maroon athletics, including the high school gym scoreboard and the bleachers at Walton Blesch Stadium.



JOE NOHA

Arguably the best quarterback in the history of Menominee Maroons football, Noha shined in three different sports while a student at Menominee High School before embarking on a decorated college career at Saginaw Valley State before returning home to lead his alma mater to a myriad of success. A 1983 graduate, Noha was a two-year standout on the football field and helped guide the Maroons to a berth in the state championship semifinals in 1982. He was a two-time All-Great Northern Conference selection, a two-time All-U.P. performer and garnered First Team All-State honors as a senior. He holds the majority of the passing records at MHS. On the basketball court, he helped the Maroons reach the 1982 Final Four and was an All-Conference performer. He was also the U.P. singles champion in tennis. Noha played for Saginaw Valley, earning the Golden Helmet Award for academic excellence. He graduated from SVSU in 1990 and began his coaching career as an assistant to SVSU and Marinette hall of famer George Ihler. Noha returned to Menominee as an English teacher and assistant varsity coach, helping the Maroons win three state championships in the process. In 2012, Noha was hired to be the next head football where he compiled a record of 82-26 in his nine-year stint. His teams also won five conference titles and made two appearances in the state finals. He also coached his tennis squad to a U.P. Championship.



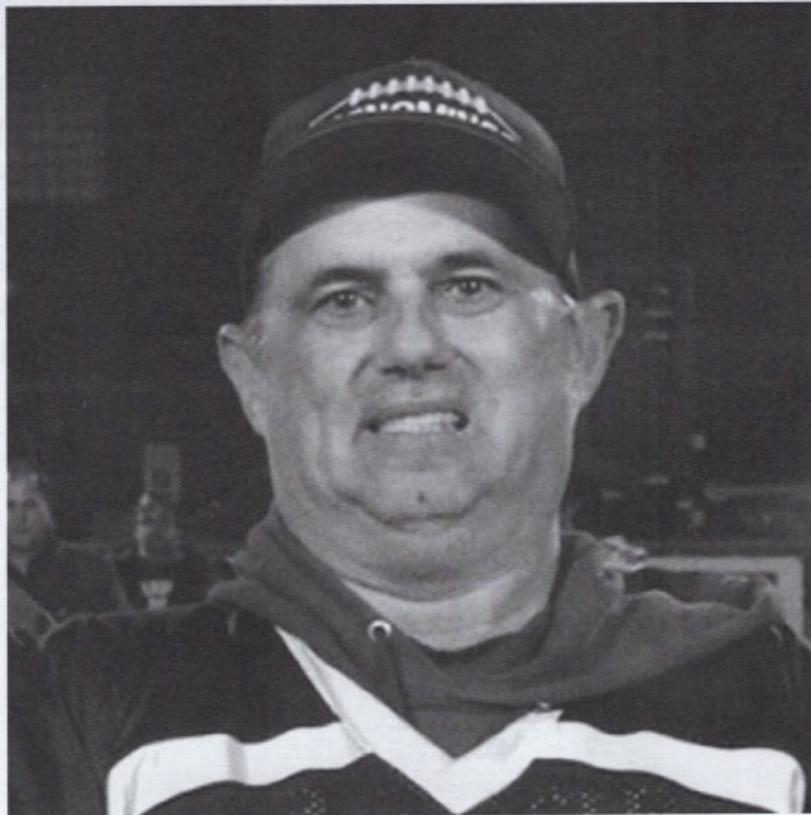
1997-1999 GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY TEAMS

With Coach of the Year honoree Randy Verkerke at the helm, the Lady Maroons won two Great Northern Conference titles and three Class A-B championships over a three year period. The 1997-99 Lady Maroons received six All-U.P. Dream Team nominations, 11 All-U.P. nods, and eight All-State selections. Missing out on a Class A-B championship in 1996, the '97 team embarked on a quest for redemption on the legs of All-U.P. Dream Team and All-State runners Erin Bourion, Tracy Wills, and Hannah Wolfe. They repeated in 1998 and took home Team of the Year honors while Wills, Wolfe and Mandi Long were All-State and Casey Peterson captured All-U.P. accolades. The Lady Maroons won their third straight Class A-B U.P. title in 1999 while Wills, Long, and Bourion received all-state laurels. Jessica Kalafut and Tracy Waitz were both All-U.P. selections. Others performing in a major way were Anna Brault, Chyla Carroll, Kerri Kellner, Rachel Sullivan, Amanda Wesoloski, and Shelly Zuraski.



BOBBY ANDERSON

Every athletic program has an unsung hero, and for over 40 years, the most valuable person to Menominee sports has been Bobby Anderson. Anderson served as manager for football in the fall, boys and girls basketball in the winter, and baseball in the spring and summer. No matter the task, Anderson performed his job with pride and passion few could duplicate. Anderson is also an accomplished athlete in his own right, having competed in the Special Olympics and winning numerous medals in basketball, swimming, and bowling.



1996-1997 BOYS CROSS COUNTRY TEAMS

Menominee has won four boys cross country championships in its history, but the 1996-97 Maroons are the only ones to do so in consecutive years. Menominee had won U.P. titles in 1953 and 1983, but the Maroons were champing at the bit for another trophy by the time the 1996 season rolled around. With 1995 individual U.P. Champion Steve Campbell leading the way, the 1996 edition of the Maroons were named the team of the year, as Campbell, All-State runners John Blake, Dave Ross and Jamie Fehrenbach and All-U.P. honoree Adam Blair helped Menominee capture the Great Northern Conference title in addition to its first U.P. title in 12 years. The 1997 Maroons won all of their races save for one and never lost to a team from the U.P. Menominee won its second straight GNC and Class A-B U.P. championships en route to once again garnering team of the year honors. Campbell earned All-U.P. Dream Team status for the second consecutive year in addition to receiving All-State honors. Ross, Blake and John Kellner were also named All-State, while Blair received All-U.P. recognition. Randy Verkerke took home Coach of the Year honors in both 1996 and 1997. Other members of the teams making major contributions were Jeff Laurin, Tyler Tafelski, and Cliff Wakeman.



TRACY WILLS-HALL

Tracy Wills-Hall was a four-year standout for both the cross country and track and field teams and was a two-year letter winner in volleyball, but her greatest strength was becoming friends with all her teammates. Of course when it came time to actually perform, Wills-Hall shined no matter the sport. She was an All-U.P. selection (1996-99) a two-time All-U.P. Dream Team performer, (1998-99), and two-time Class A-B All-State choice. She was equally adept in track and field where she was a four-year letter winner and along with Mandi Long, Jessica Kalafut, and Amanda Kudwa set the high school record in the 3,200 meter relay (9:54:37) in 2000. Wills-Hall earned Class A-B All-State honors in the 3,200 m relay in 1999 and 2000 and was an All-State performer in the 800m relay in 2000. For good measure, she was a two-time All GNC Honorable Mention in volleyball. She was also an All-state academic honoree in 1997 through 1999 and was named an MHSAA Scholar-Athlete in both cross-country and track and field as a senior. Wills-Hall attended Northern Michigan University from 2000-2005 where she was part of the Lady Wildcats GLIAC championship the same year. The Wildcat ladies participated in the NCAA National Championships each year that she ran. She graduated Magna Cum Laude in 2005. In 2023 she passed away from cancer following a career as the Assistant Director of Student Life for the Foundation of International Education in London, England. The Annual "Tracy Trot" 5K Memorial run raises funds for the Tracy Wills-Hall Memorial Scholarship fund awarded annually to an MHS graduate who wishes to study abroad.



Recognition & Accolades

The Menominee High School Athletic Hall of Fame would like to thank the following for their efforts and support. To them and to all of you for being here tonight, you have our undying gratitude for what you have given in our joint efforts.

Shooby's Trophies & Apparel

EagleHerald

Stephenson National Bank & Trust

Matt Lehman

Bay Cities Radio

Allison Stewart

Chuck Patrick

Pullman Center

Jim Callow

"Maroon Fans" Decorating Committee

Josh Kellner

Donations to the Hall of Fame in 2025

John & Kris Albrecht

Maroon supporters and friends are encouraged to check out the new Hall of Fame website, set up by MHS alum Brian Johnson ('78) and his daughter, Julia Mewada. Visitors to the website can browse through all six of the Hall's previous induction classes and view detailed biographies including each inductee's athletic accomplishments. There are also photo galleries, nomination forms, and a list of frequently asked questions. The website address is www.mhsahof.com. Access can also be reached via this QR code.



Previously Inducted

2018

Fred Norcross
Francis Tallent
Richard Lacousiere
Billy Wells

Larry Ebsch
Ken Hofer
Bill Rademacher
1967 Basketball Team

Pat Miller
Syd Wells
Tiffany Hodge Gilbert
Dick Deschaine

2019

John McLean
Mary Agnes Wall
Jack Streidl
Mike Shatusky

Fran Mellinger
Jim Payne
Heather Nelson
Bob Krysiak

Joe Johnson
Ron "Satch" Englund

2020

Walter Niemann
Joe Oreshoski
Dan Wesoloski

Micki Perket Harlow
Bret Pearson
Pete Mayhew

Al Ruleau
1998 Football Team

2022

Fred Matz
Dewey Bellisle
Janet Hallfrisch Sbar

Denise Gentile James
Brent Nerat
Tyler Tafelski

Drew Buyarski
Chuck Patrick

2023

John Noppenberg
Jon David &
Marye Mathieu

David Michael Miller
Chris Hofer
Joe Pfankuch

Josh Tarbox
Mandi Long Zemba
Korry Schwanz

2024

1929 Football Team
Len Umnus
Benjamin Fernstrum
William Fernstrum
Dr. Robert Theuerkauf

David Haglund
Dr. Burnell Stripling
Michael Photenhauer
Peter Pericolosi
Gary Stewart

Wade Hodge
Jason Boucher
Ashley Taccolini Hansmann



*Thank you for attending!
We hope to see you next year!*