

**MENOMINEE HIGH SCHOOL
ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME**

8TH ANNUAL INDUCTION CEREMONY



**Saturday, May 2, 2026
Pullman Center
Menominee, Michigan**

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

INVOCATION.....John Wills
OPENING REMARKSRandy Demeuse
MASTER OF CEREMONIESJohn Wills

John Moerchen

Accepting on behalf of Mr. Moerchen: Alice Moerchen
Plaque Presenter: Randy Demeuse

Tom Kaeser

Accepting on behalf of Mr. Kaeser: Christine Preissner
Plaque Presenter: Jody Korch

Donn Theuerkauf

Plaque Presenter: Jean Stegeman

Dennis Svoboda

Plaque Presenter: Bret Pearson

Jenny Mellinger Smith

Plaque Presenter: Tony Hofer

Nathan Twork

Plaque Presenter: Bill Schwanz

Randy Verkerke

Plaque Presenter: Steve Campbell

2006 State Championship Football Team

Plaque Presenter: Josh Kellner

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

NOMINATIONS & SELECTION COMMITTEE

Ms. Sara Betzinger	Ms. Nikki Mathieu
Ms. Sue Erdman	Mr. Peter Mayhew
Mr. Ken Hofer	Mr. Brent Nerat
Mr. Tony Hofer	Mr. Brian Nutter
Mr. William Jones III	Mr. William Schwanz
Mr. William Kelley	Ms. Jean Stegeman
Mr. Josh Kellner	Mr. Dale Van Duinen
Mr. Mark Klatt	

ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Drew Buyarski	Superintendent, Menominee Public Schools
Mr. Jon Beckman	High School Principal
Mr. Sam Larson	Athletic Director, Menominee High School

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Ms. Jocelyn Rankinen	Trustee

Menominee High School Athletic Hall of Fame

Welcome to the 8th 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, 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.

The 8th induction class of the Hall of Fame isn't much different than the previous classes in that there is greatness among them. Beginning with an athlete who was dominant on both the gridiron, basketball court, and on the track back in the late '40's and early '50's, and also served his country in the Korean War; a locally praised sportswriter who more than covered the event, but the athlete whom he recognized with heart; a football, basketball, and a track standout who not only won letters in those sports but also still holds two records plus was an all-A student; a man who was dubbed "The Big Back" who was feared by opponents and is one of five MHS athletes to receive a Division 1 scholarship; a woman who set the standard in high school golf, as well as in college, winning four letters in golf and two in basketball and was most outstanding senior athlete; an exceptional athlete and scholar who won possibly every award one could receive while participating in football, basketball, and track; a charismatic and motivating coach who turned a cross country team into a state powerhouse; and a football team for the ages, who never lost a game all season, right up to and including the state championship, the class of 2026 is star-studded and can be considered one the greatest groups of people to ever wear, coach, or write about the Maroon and Gold.

JOHN MOERCHEN

John Moerchen made things look easy any time he had a ball in his hands. A three-sport standout in baseball, football and basketball, Moerchen dazzled fans with his natural athleticism as much as his million-dollar smile. Moerchen was part of Menominee's first American legion baseball team in 1949 and pitched several years of Legion ball. Including at least one no-hitter. Moerchen struck out 11 batters against Iron River in 1949 and punched out 17 batters in five innings against Marinette. Moerchen earned All-U.P. laurels as a defensive back and helped the Maroons win U.P. championships after undefeated seasons in 1951 and 1952. In basketball, Moerchen served as team captain and earned All-U.P. and All-State recognition from the Detroit Free Press as a forward. He also held three Menominee scoring records upon his graduation in 1952, winning the Barbara Silverthorne award as the top senior athlete. After serving his country in Korea, he was a walk-on in Green Bay, and signed with the Packers in 1958.



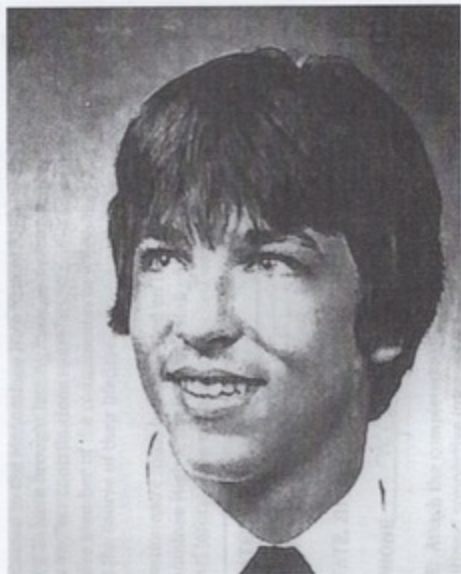
TOM KAESER

No one brought Maroon athletics to life like Tom Kaeser. Writing with a passion that jumped off the page, Tom spent 25 years covering Menominee athletics, first as sports editor of the Menominee Herald-Leader from 1989 to 1995 and then as a sports writer for the Menominee/Marinette Eagle-Herald. Kaeser cared far more about the student-athletes as people than he did any final score or championship that they may have won. Tom didn't hesitate to recognize the number 8 runner on a cross-country team or the basketball player off the bench. He specialized in capturing the human essence of each athlete that he wrote about. His efforts were genuinely appreciated by generations of Maroon athletes.



DONN THEUERKAUF

Anyone with the last name of Theuerkauf carries the burden of excellence at Menominee High School, but even by those lofty standards, Donn Theuerkauf managed to surpass expectations. A naturally gifted athlete, Theuerkauf was a three-sport standout during his time at MHS, starring in football, basketball, and track and field. Theuerkauf won letters in all three sports, but made his biggest impact in track, where he established two Menominee High School records in the long jump and low hurdles events. Also a straight-A student, Theuerkauf was named an All-American scholar-athlete in 1978. He also won the Barbara Silverthorne Award as Menominee's top student-athlete and was named Maroon Athlete of the Year in 1978.



DENNIS SVOBODA

The mere mention of Dennis Svoboda's name was enough to instill fear in even the toughest of opponents. Nicknamed "The Big Back", Svoboda made a habit of flattening anyone that dared get in his path on the football field. As a senior, Svoboda was named the Great Northern Conference Back of the Year, garnered All-Conference honors at offensive back and defensive end, and received All-U.P. and All-State accolades as a defensive end. Svoboda was an All-State selection in track and field his senior year. Svoboda is one of only five Maroons in history to receive an NCAA Division 1 scholarship offer. At Central Michigan University, Svoboda converted to tight end and was a three-year letter winner while helping the Chippewas win the MAC Conference championship in 1984.



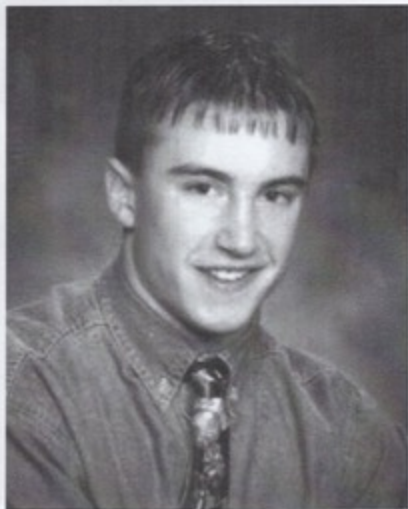
JENNY MELLINGER SMITH

There have been scores of excellent golfers in the history of Menominee High School, but few were as consistent as Jenny Mellinger (Smith). A four-year letter winner on the links, Smith was a three-time medal winner at the U.P. Finals (1983-85). She won a then-record three straight individual U.P. titles and was the medalist or runner-up in every match over her final three years, going 37-4 over that span. With Smith on the team, the Lady Maroons notched 37 straight team wins and captured four consecutive team U.P. championships. Smith was the 1985 Twin City women's golf champion and placed second overall in the ages 15-16 division at the Michigan State Junior Tournament as a 15 year old. Smith attended Northern Illinois University and was a two-time WGCA All-American Scholar Team selection. She competed in the UPLPGA for over 20 years. In basketball, Smith was a two-year letter winner and helped Menominee take home District and Regional titles as a senior.



NATHAN TWORK

A leader on and off the field, Nathan Twork's commitment to excellence established him as one of the Maroon greats. He earned GNC All Conference First Team, GNC Offensive Player of the Year, All Upper Peninsula First Team, and All State First Team in Class B BB. His senior awards included the Thomas Caley Memorial MVP Award, the Clifford "Swede" Nyberg Outstanding Back Award, the Barbara Silverthorne Outstanding Senior Athlete Award, and the Maroon Booster Club Outstanding Male Athlete Award. As a team captain, he led the Maroons to a Great North Conference Championship, the ABC Barber Trophy as "UP Champions," and the school's first 9 0 regular season since 1952. Finishing his senior year second all time in regular season rushing with 1,190 yards and second all time in career regular season rushing with 2,147 yards. He became all time leader in combined regular season and playoff rushing with 1,312 yards in a season and 2,269 yards in a career. He also set records for most rushing yards in a game, most touchdowns in a game, season, and career, and most carries in a game and career.



RANDY VERKERKE

In the 1990's Randy Verkerke helped guide the Menominee High School cross country program to heights few thought possible. In 1992 there were barely enough runners for Menominee to field a cross country team. Five years later, two school busses were needed to transport the more than 70 student-athletes that flocked to the program in a testament to the pied piper of coaching. With Verkerke at the helm, Menominee captured back-to-back boys' championships in 1996 and 1997, while the Lady Maroons took home the U.P. title in 1997, 1998, and 1999. A number of his runners won All-U.P. and All-State honors. Verkerke was named U.P. Class A-B Coach of the Year in 1996 and 1997. He coached numerous Maroons to individual All-Conference, All-U.P. and All-State awards.



2006 STATE CHAMPIONSHIP FOOTBALL TEAM

Menominee's first state football championship happened in 1998, but in 2006, the team can lay claim to be the greatest gridiron gang in Maroons' history. Energized by a 39-29 loss to Muskegon Oakridge in the 2005 State semifinals, the 2006 Maroons laid claim to a 14-0 season. It was a blowout year as the home squad blew out the majority of its competition right through to the championship game. Never behind in any score of the year, the Maroons capped the perfect season with a resounding 41-6 victory over Madison Heights Madison to bring home its second state title in eight years. The team was honored as the class A-B Team of the year with coach Ken Hofer honored at A-B Coach of the Year. The 2006 Maroons pitched seven shutouts including four in the post season and allowed just 44 points in total all season while averaging 38.5 points per game offensively



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	

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 eight 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

2025

The Blesch Family
Paul G. Christensen
Don Hofer
Gordon Pekuri
Roger Pekuri

Bill Schwanz
Jerry Derusha
Joe Noha
Bobby Anderson

Boys' 1996-97
Cross Country Team
Girls' 1997-99
Cross Country Teams
Tracy Wills-Hall



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