



BASKETBALL STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS
2022

Dedication
Ceremony

MARCH 18, 2022
MOHEGAN SUN
CABERET THEATRE

DEDICATION CEREMONY PROGRAM

Welcome

Dr. Glenn Lungarini, Executive Director, CAS-CIAC

Introduction

**Margaret Williamson, Principal, St. Mary School, Simsbury
Chair, CIAC Girls Basketball Committee**

**Gary Franklin, Principal, Northwest Regional High School, Winsted
Chair, CIAC Boys Basketball Committee**

Presentation Of Awards

John Holt, Media Director, CAS-CIAC

2022 CIAC Boys & Girls Basketball Merit Awards

Gary Barcher, Boys Basketball Coach

Joe Grippo, Girls Basketball Coach

Ahmed Ali Yaseen, Official, Board 35

Jeffrey Smith, Official, Board 10

John Niski, Athletic Director, Shelton High School

Jan Volland, Athletic Director, Plainfield High School

Championship Dedication Award

Frank & Sheila Beneski

GARY BARCHER, BOYS BASKETBALL COACH

Over the course of 38 years as a high school basketball coach, Gary Barcher earned the reputation of being one of Connecticut's most outstanding coaches.

A graduate of American International College (AIC), Gary earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Education, and continued his education at Central Connecticut State University, where he received a Masters Degree in Secondary Education. In 1985, he began a 14 year period as head basketball coach at South Windsor High School. In 1999, Gary began his tremendous tenure as the boys' basketball coach at Bloomfield High School where he continued to coach until 2018, when he retired with 280 wins.

There were many noteworthy achievements for Gary's basketball teams at Bloomfield High School. They captured three CCC tournament championships (2001, 2002, and 2010) and three CCC division championships. In CIAC State Tournament competition, Coach Barcher's teams had outstanding success with ten state semi-final appearances, five championship game appearances and two state championships (2002 and 2008).

Gary earned recognition from his coaching peers a number of times including three Walter Ackerly Sportsmanship Awards from IAABO Board 6 and the CHSCA Coach of the Year Award in 2013. He was the 2018 Connecticut nominee for the National High School Athletic Coaches Association Coach of the Year and was a finalist for the National Coach of the Year. Gary was inducted into the AIC Athletic Hall of Fame in 2013 and the New England Basketball Hall of Fame in 2015.

In presenting the Merit Award to Gary Barcher, the CIAC recognizes his long and successful coaching career and his significant contributions to CIAC basketball, the student-athletes of Connecticut and to the coaching profession.

JOE GRIPPO, GIRLS BASKETBALL COACH

Joe Grippo is a native of New London where he attended St. Joseph School before attending St. Bernard High School, and graduating in 1973. Joe attended Providence College and graduated in 1978. He earned a Master's Degree from Southern Connecticut State University. Joe spent his entire career teaching math in the Clinton school system, first at Jared Eliot Middle School (1978-1984) and then at The Morgan School (1984-2013).

Joe's coaching career has been marked with phenomenal success. He coached volleyball for 33 years (1983-2014) and girls' basketball for 34 years (1982-2014). He is the only coach in CT state history to win more than 600 games in two girls' sports. His teams won 12 Class S volleyball championships, including seven straight from 1992 to 1998. Morgan was state runner-up on seven occasions. Morgan, under Joe's tutelage, won 24 Shoreline Conference Championships, including 22 in a row. Joe was selected Connecticut High School Coach of the Year in 1996 and, in 2013, was inducted into the Connecticut Volleyball Hall of Fame. In 1997, Joe was awarded the Doc McInerney Coach of the Year by the Connecticut Sports Writers Alliance.

Joe's basketball coaching has been equally impressive. In his 34 years at the helm at The Morgan School, his teams compiled a record of 593 wins and 223 losses, garnering two state championships and three runners-up. His teams won six Shoreline Conference titles. Joe has been recognized by his coaching peers for his effective coaching, including being selected Middlesex County Coach of the Year four times; the New Haven Register Coach of the Year; New Haven Tap Off Club Coach of the Year and the Connecticut High School Coaches Association Coach of the Year in 2005. Joe was inducted into the New Haven Tap Off Club Hall of Fame in 2018.

The CIAC Basketball Committee is proud to recognize Joe Grippo of The Morgan School, for his coaching excellence and presents him with a CIAC Merit Award.

AHMED ALI YASEEN, OFFICIAL

Ahmed Ali Yaseen is an elite international basketball referee who began his career with FIBA Asia in 2008. Representing his native Iraq, Ahmed has officiated for three World Cups, more than a dozen World Cup qualifiers, the Olympic qualifiers, and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. His travels have taken him to Belarus, Canada, China, Egypt, France, Iran, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Thailand, and UAE.

After relocating to the U.S. in 2015, Ahmed joined Board 35 in Connecticut and later became a dual member of Board 6. He began officiating Division III games in 2017, and in 2021 he was invited to referee for Team USA's pre-Olympic practice games in Las Vegas before they headed to Tokyo.

An accomplished educator, Ahmed has worked as a trainer and coach both in Iraq and internationally since 2009. Upon receiving his Bachelor's degree from Diyala University, he became a lecturer for the Physical Education department at Al Mustansirya University in Baghdad, where he taught for six years. Ahmed became a U.S. citizen in 2019.

The CIAC is pleased to present a Merit Award to Ahmed Ali Yaseen.

JEFFREY SMITH, OFFICIAL

Connecticut has produced several basketball officials who have been recognized for excellence across the state and nation. Jeff Smith has earned this status over 30 years of stellar basketball performance on and off the court and has earned the reputation of being one of the nation's top officials.

Jeff has been a certified member of the International Association of Approved Basketball Officials (IAABO) since 1990. His first officiating experience was as an Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) referee, beginning in 1990 and continuing to present. As a member of the New Haven IAABO Board #10 in 1999, Jeff has actively served Connecticut high school basketball in many ways. He is an excellent basketball official, served as IAABO Rules Interpreter for Board #10 and a member of the Better Officiating Committee. On the state level in IAABO, Jeff was Rules Interpreter from 2007 to 2014. He has officiated countless tournaments and championships and has been a regular in CIAC boys' basketball tournaments, including working a long series of state championship games. His contributions to high school basketball in Connecticut is well-known and respected.

In 1999, Jeff began officiating NCAA Division I men's basketball games. He quickly advanced up the ranks and worked in the Metro Atlantic Conference, Colonial Athletic Conference, Northeast Conference, Ivy League, America East Conference and the Patriot League where he was assigned to the 2002 league championship game. Jeff has been a NCAA tournament referee since 2016.

In 1999, Jeff also entered the ranks of professional basketball officiating. He was discovered in the NBA pre-draft camp and subsequently worked NBA summer league camps. He was a Continental Basketball League (CBA) official in 2001 and 2002. Jeff became a hot item in the WNBA in 2001 and has worked WNBA games, including playoff, semi-final and final games. Jeff has also worked in the NBA Veterans' Camp and the Venezuela Liga Professional League playoffs and championship. Jeff has become a well-known NCAA women's basketball official, including in the American Athletic Conference, the Big East Conference*, Atlantic Coast Conference, American Athletic Conference*, Metro Atlantic Conference*, Colonial Athletic Conference, America East Conference*, Northeast Conference*, Ivy League*, and Patriot League. (*worked conference tournaments or championship games)

Jeff is an outstanding basketball official whose professional skills and demeanor have contributed significantly to Connecticut high school basketball and the CIAC. He epitomizes what it is to be a fair, professional official and, as such, is a stellar role model for young officials and high school athletes to follow. The CIAC is pleased to present a Merit Award to Jeffrey Smith.

JOHN NISKI, ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

John Niski's career has extended across a wide variety of athletic leadership accomplishments. He has demonstrated a strong capacity for working with many people and has shown the highest level of professionalism.

After graduating from Naugatuck High School in 1980, he attended Central Connecticut State University where he earned a BS in Industrial Arts Education. He earned an MS from Southern Connecticut State University in Instructional Technology in 1990, and then a Sixth Year in Educational Administration at Sacred Heart University in 2002.

Professionally, John began his teaching career in 1985 in Technology Education in the Shelton Public Schools rising to the department chairmanship in 1998. John became the Supervisor of Physical Education, Health and Director of Athletics at Shelton High School in 2004. He oversaw 17 Health and PE teachers and was the athletic administrator for 25 high school varsity athletic programs. John recently retired after 36 years in the Shelton Public School system as a teacher, coach, and 17 years as Athletic Administrator.

John served the CIAC basketball committees as a tournament host site supervisor for many years. He was dedicated to serving student-athletes through active participation in Unified Sports, boys and girls volleyball, basketball and robotics. John was Chairman of the Southern Connecticut Conference Athletic Directors for over 10 years. He also served as the SCC cheerleading chairman, captains leadership council, scheduling committee and executive board. He also served on the CIAC boys volleyball committee. John is currently working part-time as the CIAC Assistant Director of Unified Sports.

We honor John with a Merit Award for his expansive background in education and athletics and for serving students in multiple capacities and for his steadfast leadership over many years.

JAN VOLAND, ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

Jan Voland has had an athletic career that extends across many different sports. She has long been regarded as an excellent athlete and educator. This recognition is befitting for someone who has distinguished herself in the field of athletics and in the sport of basketball.

Jan began her coaching career at Griswold High School where she was the varsity basketball and softball coach from 1979 to 1982.

She served as a Physical Education teacher at Plainfield Public Schools starting in 1978, teaching at Plainfield Central School and Plainfield High School. She became the girls' varsity basketball coach at Plainfield Central School in 1987. Her tenure extended to 1998 when she took the helm at Plainfield High School and remained the coach until 2005. At Plainfield, her achievements include an overall record of 280-251. Her team won the QVC tournament in 1993.

Jan was the softball coach at Plainfield High School from 1995 through 2005. In softball, she accumulated a 150-73 record. The softball teams won the QVC tournaments in 1999 and in 2000.

Jan grew up in North Haven and attended North Haven High School (class of 1972). She played basketball, softball and track at NHHS.

After high school Jan attended Norwich University where she competed on the girls' basketball team and earned a B.S. in Physical Education and Health Education in 1976. She went on to earn a Master's Degree in Human Relations from Eastern Connecticut State University in 1985. Jan became the Athletic Director at Plainfield High School in 2005 and remains in that position today.

The CIAC Basketball Committee is proud to honor Jan Voland with a Merit Award for her outstanding career as an educator, athlete, coach and athletic director.

CHAMPIONSHIP DEDICATION AWARD

FRANK & SHEILA BENESKI



It has been a love affair for the ages; not just with each other, but Frank and Sheila Beneski of West Suffield love high school basketball. It goes back to Frank's high school days when he and Sheila's brother, Dan were teammates on the 1959-60 Suffield High team that won the state tournament. He also participated in baseball and soccer, where he was a member of the 1958 team that was a co-state champion. Then came Frank's brother Ted, himself a star three-sport athlete at Suffield High and they were present for nearly every game of Ted's high school career. With that, a love of the sport reached epic proportions.



It was not uncommon for Frank and Sheila to see 125 games per year. While they have attended the Women's Final Four regularly since the 1990's, it is the high school game that they enjoy so much. They became connoisseurs of the sport,



planning out their trips early in the week to seek which games across the state would be best. Whether it be a nearby tilt in Hartford or a much longer trip to Stamford or Fairfield, if the game is good, the Beneski's will be there.

They knew just about every coach in the state, the players, almost every referee doing the game, most of the basketball writers, school administrators, and tons of other fans that they had met during their 45 years of following high school basketball. It was unanimously agreed that if Frank and Sheila were there you were at the best game in the state!

CHAMPIONSHIP DEDICATION AWARD FRANK & SHEILA BENESKI

Frank is a 1960 graduate of Suffield High School. He matriculated to the University of Hartford where he was training to be a math teacher until he turned to actuarial studies. He joined Connecticut General Life Insurance Company (now CIGNA) where he worked for 32 years, retiring in 1995.

Sheila is a graduate of Our Lady of the Angels Academy, formerly of Enfield, Connecticut. She then attended Bay Path College where she earned an associate degree in science. She worked as a medical secretary until she left the workforce to raise her two sons, Tim and Peter.



The couple were married in 1964, and just after Peter was born in 1968, the Beneski family moved to East Granby, where they lived for over twenty years before they returned to West Suffield. Their son Tim was formerly the freshman girls basketball coach at Enfield High School; he previously coached at Avon Old Farms School. Tim and his wife Cara live in West Suffield with their four sons, Chancey, Jake, Seamus, and Eamon. Peter passed away in 2002.

The Beneski's have been involved in a number of civic roles. Most recently Frank and Sheila were instrumental in founding the Suffield Athletic Hall of Fame, where Frank served as President and Sheila as secretary. Frank is a member of the Hall of Fame as an individual and as part of the 1960 State Championship Basketball Team.

In September of 2019, Sheila was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and the First Lady of Connecticut High School Basketball died on January 17, 2020.

THANK YOU PARTNERS!

