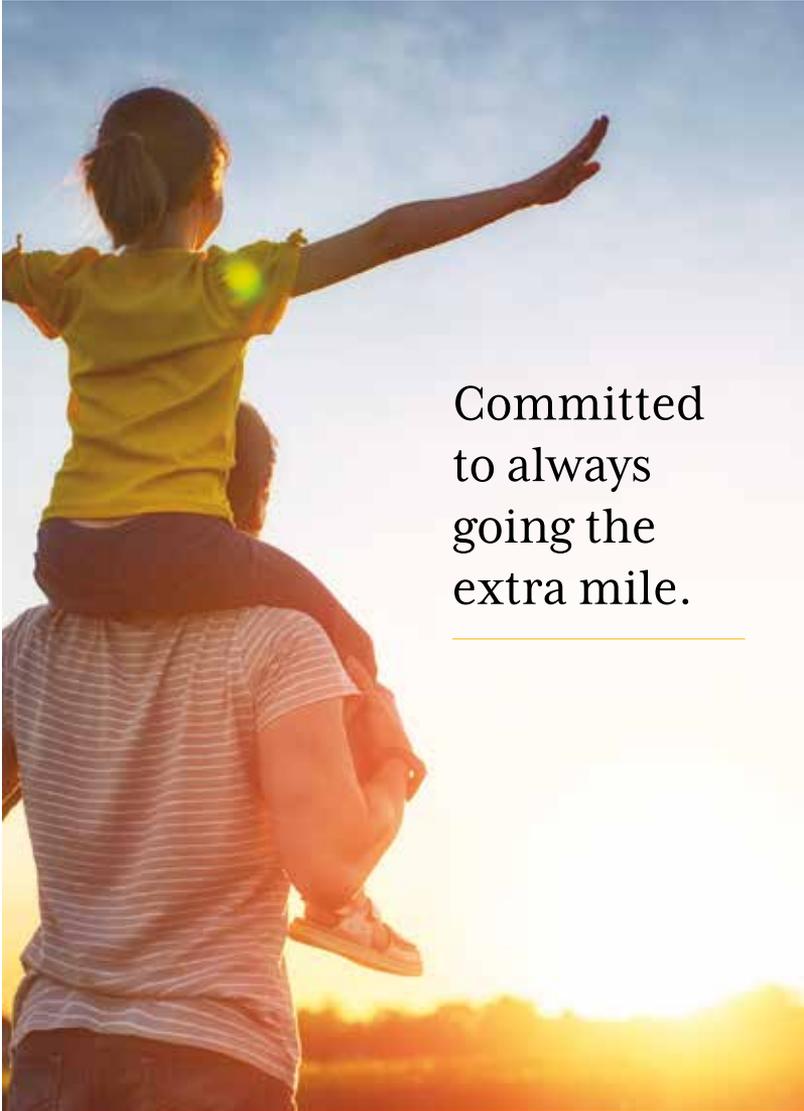


RIDGEFIELD OLD TIMERS
ASSOCIATION



29th Annual Dinner
October 15, 2022



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A Message from Our Chairman

As the new chairman of the Ridgefield Old Timers Association (ROTA) I would like to first thank our former longtime chairman, Peter Nichols, for his many years of doing a great job leading this wonderful group. He has been an inspiration to me to do my best.

Congratulations to tonight's four Ridgefield High School 2022 graduates: Alyza Crook, Josiah deGrasse, Eric Pereira, and Emily Fox! Alyza and Josiah are receiving the Tom Belote Scholarship which began only three years ago in memory of Tom, who was a longtime ROTA chairman.

These 4-year scholarships each year would not be possible without the support of so many people and local businesses over the past 30 years and also those that contributed to the Silent Auction has also been very helpful. Please do what you can to help.

Tonight's annual recognition dinner is being catered by Ridgefield Prime as it has for several years and we would like to again thank St. Mary's Parish for allowing us to use their beautiful hall once again.

The purpose of tonight's dinner is to honor Ridgefielders for their past accomplishments on the athletic field and in the classroom along with honoring those who have dedicated countless hours for the benefit of our town. This dinner also helps us raise money to fund our scholarships. We are one of the few organizations which give our scholarship recipients a check for each of their four years of undergraduate studies.

I would like to thank all of the members of ROTA for their continued hard work throughout the year by coming to meetings, organizing this wonderful event, writing the bios for each of the recipients, organizing/collecting the ads and bios and putting them into the program, setting up the ticket sales, running tonight's silent auction and so much more! Those members are: Gregg and Manette Hutchings, Mark Fitzgerald, John Pieriandri, Trish Larosa, Darla Shaw, Trish Gernert, Dave Kiley, Tim McKee, Terry Hughes, Pete Nichols and Linda Hutchings.

I would like encourage anyone that is reading this to get involved with this wonderful organization tonight or in the near future. Find out more about us at Ridgefieldoldtimers.org and thanks so much for coming and enjoy the evening!

Mark Lionetti, Chairman

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The 29th annual
Ridgefield Old Timers Dinner
Saturday, Oct. 15, 2022

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Who's in charge of the Old Timers?

The Officers: Mark Lionetti, chairman; Trish LaRosa, secretary;
Dave Kiley, vice chairman, Manette Hutchings, treasurer.

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Trish Gernert, Terry Hughes, Gregg Hutchings, Manette Hutchings,
Dave Kiley, Trish LaRosa, Pete Nichols, John Pierandri, Darla Shaw,
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Denise Qualey and husband Brian.

CIVIC AWARD

Denise Qualey **Making young lives better**

There are few adults in Ridgefield that work more closely with our youth than Denise Qualey. A certified social worker who is employed by Kids in Crisis, Denise also holds numerous volunteer positions that relate to helping youth in our community.

As an administrator for Kids in Crisis Denise works in Ridgefield's secondary schools with the Teen Talk program which helps students to discuss issues in their lives that are causing them to be troubled. She also works with the Kids in Crisis home in Greenwich, where students who are truly in crisis and need to get out of their homes, can go. Whether Denise is working in a school, the home of a youth or the housing facility, Denise is dealing with issues that youth in Ridgefield face.

When asking Denise about the problems that youth in Ridgefield seem to be confronting, she replied. "There is

always the problem of substance abuse. The substance may change from time to time, but when young people are troubled they turn to alcohol, drugs, or whatever is trendy at the time. More recently we have had to focus on anxiety, pressure, and dealing with student depression. Lastly, our big concern today is technology, how it has taken over the lives of our youth and not always in a positive way. Technology can become as much of an addiction and harmful as substance abuse.”

As a volunteer, Denise runs Project Resilience. This is a project that started after the Sandy Hook tragedy and is still as relevant today. The program meets regularly with parents, students, teachers and other interested people to discuss issues that students are facing and possible ways to alleviate some of these problems. Such big name speakers as Julie Haines have spoken at meetings about raising children in troubled times. The program has had to move to the Ridgefield library since so many people are now attending the vital discussions. Denise is also proud of her volunteer work as head of the Ridgefield Youth Commission. This group involves people of all ages and from all different groups in town. Like Kids in Crisis and Project Resilience, the Youth Commission is trying to provide our youth with acceptable alternatives for successful living.

An example of an outstanding project that Denise found memorable was the constructing of the tile mural on the side of the Youth Barn near Veterans Park School. This project involved senior citizens, SPHERE members, the Boys and Girls Club, the Scouts, sporting and musical groups, mothers in town, people from various churches, contractors, etc. All of these groups had one goal in mind and that was to design and complete an inspirational mural that would show how it is possible for all aspects of a community to work together successfully. So many worthwhile activities in town are being sponsored by the Youth Commission.

In connection with the Boys and Girls Club, Denise volunteers here as well. She works with the club on the teen barn project, fund raising and helps the club to promote various projects. She also enjoys being a judge for many of their events as she gets to celebrate Ridgefield youth in a special way.

Beginning last year, Denise was appointed as a volunteer to the executive board of the Compassion Project in

town. Through working on this board she is helping to define Ridgefield, all the good that it embraces and all the good that the town is capable of doing in the future. At some point in the year 2020, Ridgefield will be one of the few towns that will be signing a Compassion Pact for Ridgefield with specific objectives to be met. Most of the 400 places that have already signed a pact are larger cities.

Ridgefield has a program for Rides for Ridgefield to help senior citizen get from place to place in town. Denise and her fellow worker, Ms. Triani, have started a new program that helps bring food, prescriptions and gift cards to senior citizen. Through working with Grace Weber at Founder's Hall and the social services department, Denise finds out who needs this service, develops a spread sheet, and enlists volunteers to help with this purchase and delivery service. Denise presently has 75 volunteers to help with this crucial service.

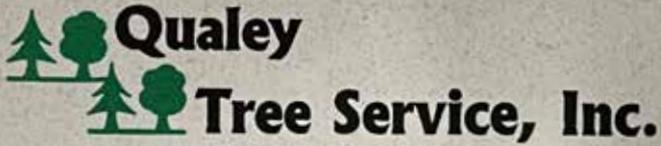
Denise has lived in Ridgefield for 26 years with her husband and two daughters, who are now in their late twenties. She feels so fortunate to have discovered Ridgefield and been able to raise her family here. She loves the town for its nature trails, places to walk her dogs, and great places to unite with her large group of family and friends.

When asked what she would most like to see in town, Denise replied, "I would like to see us talk more about all the acts of kindness that are taking place in our community so that people will better understand how important compassion and kindness are to a productive life. You can never have too much kindness in a community. I love the orange ribbons on the trees and the ringing of bells in town at 7 p.m. to celebrate those who are on the front lines of the Corona virus. We need more activities of this type."

Without people in our community like Denise, Ridgefield would not be the family based community that everyone loves so deeply. When others in town care as much about your children as you do, you know you are living in a very special place. Thank you Denise for helping us to better understand our children and our community and how they can best coexist.—*Darla Shaw*

Brian P. Qualey

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EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR:**Jean Jaykus****A loved and honored teacher**

Ridgefield's teacher of the year 2000 was Ms. Jean Jaykus. Known for her upbeat personality, hands on science classes and inquiry method of teaching, Jaykus is a teacher that students never forget.

After teaching for 40 years at Scotland School, Jaykus formally retired, but she has continued to teach in many different ways. "I love to teach and I love the students so I am still teaching in the PTO specialized after school programs. I do my own version of the Invention Convention where students are able to use their critical thinking skills to solve problems and come up with their own inventions," explained Jaykus.

Jaykus is also actively involved in the Keeler Kids Program at Keeler Tavern. Here she develops original historical programs based on primary research. Students then create their own reenactments, presentations, and publications based on what they have learned. This is part of Keeler Tavern's Educational Program for Students.

Known as a teacher ahead of her time, Jaykus always gave her students the necessary materials and then let them find their own answers to the questions. She does not believe in just giving students the information for purposes of a test. Jaykus believes in making learning as authentic as possible. She had her students each write their own magazines, which



Jean Jaykus spent 40 years teaching at Scotland School.

she actually had published. Each magazine had a theme and stories written in five different formats.

Jaykus also won a Celebration of Excellence Award in the field of technology and science. The title of her project was the Arthropod Squad. Way before teachers were using technology on a regular basis, Jaykus was exposing her students to what was available and how they could do their research and reporting through technology.

Two programs that Jaykus remembers fondly were the Exchange Program with the Danbury School System and the Changing Teacher for a Day Program. “We started the fifth grade exchange program with Danbury through a grant. We spent one day at a school in Danbury and they spent one day with us. The students from Danbury could not believe all the material goods we had in our classrooms. On the other hand, our students found that we are not really all that different from the students in Danbury,” said Jaykus.

In regard to exchanging with a high school teacher for a day, Jaykus remembers, “This was a very enlightening experience. I discovered that if you are a good teacher you can teach at any level. The high school teacher told me that she learned that our younger students are much more open and interested in learning than high school students who just want to deal with the facts.”

As a teacher, Jaykus has always been an advocate for students taking a position on a particular topic, finding evidence and speaking out. In her own life, Jaykus does this as well. She is very concerned about the way education is changing in some respects and speaks out regularly in public forums. Her feelings are applauded by many in the teaching community who have witnessed both the good and bad changes in education and society.

For over 20 years, Jaykus has participated as the phone link person in the educational television program, Ridgefield Now We Are Talking. She believes that ideas and opinions should not be suppressed and that we need platforms for open discussion without retaliation.

Throughout her 60 years in Ridgefield, Jaykus has been extremely involved in the community. She is very active

at Keeler Tavern, with the Ridgefield Symphony, and at St. Stephen's Church. She enjoys working on the St. Stephen's Decker Committee which finds ways to help the older people in the congregation. The organization helps to get people out to socialize, provides home visitations, develops programs, runs trips, and makes certain health is being taken care of in the best way possible.

Grandchildren and travel are also important to Jaykus. She has three children, ten grandchildren and one great grandchild. She is constantly planning a new trip. Jaykus has traveled to almost every country in Europe, as well as Russia, and loves small boat travel.

When asked if she plans to retire to another place, Jaykus smiles and says, "No way. I live right on Main Street so that I can walk daily. I also have access to the best symphony, library, senior center, historical societies, schools, and everything else you can imagine. Why would I want to move?" —*Darla Shaw*

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*Interested in ROTA?
See any of the folks listed on
page 4.*



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Doug Clewell with wife Grace.

POSTHUMOUS AWARD

Doug Clewell

An American Legion mainstay

The Ridgefield Old Timers were greatly saddened to hear about the recent death of Doug Clewell. He had been a mainstay of the American Legion and cooked for Old Timer's dinners and other functions. There is no one who did not have a kind word to say about Doug.

Doug was born near Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. After high school Doug joined the Air Force. However, before leaving for Korea he married Grace, a wonderful partner, who Doug was married to for over 60 years.

When Doug returned home from the war he started working in advertising and printing with Pollack Publishers and was asked to move to the New York area. With this move Doug and Grace moved to their forever home on Poconock Trail in

Ridgefield. In Doug's spare time he made much of the family's furniture and many other intricate wood working products.

Along with his masterful woodworking, Doug became very active in the community. Doug served on multiple committees at the American Legion Hall for over 30 years, acting as the Legion's finance officer. He proudly served as a Military Honor Guard covering all of Fairfield County as well.

Doug was involved with making most of the major repairs to the American Legion Hall on North Salem Road, as well as serving as their key chef. Doug was also very active in the Ridgefield Men's club serving as treasurer of the organization and cook. He also started a gourmet cooking club.

In addition to the American Legion and Men's Club, Doug headed up the town's graveyard committee for over a decade and was involved in the Ridgefield Historical Societies activities. A religious man, Doug served as an usher and welcome person at Jesse Lee Church each Sunday. Doug was most proud to be president of Jesse Lee's Older Than Dirt Sunday breakfast club and a key player in the Methodist Yankee Peddler Fair.

Not an athlete himself, Doug was an avid fan of the Buffalo Bills, N.Y. Mets, and UCONN Women's Basketball team. His first job when getting out of the Air Force was in Buffalo, N.Y.

No matter which organization Doug was associated with he provided his services as a master cook. His favorite meal to cook was pulled pork which he learned to cook from Wendall Coultis at the Yankee Peddler Fair.

Doug was always a gentleman, quiet man with a huge heart, and with a willingness to help people or organizations in need. Doug is greatly missed in town.—*Darla Shaw*

Help the Old Timers Help Our Youth...

Support the ROTA Scholarship Fund!

Ridgefield Old Timers Association

P.O. Box 436

Ridgefield CT 06877

ridgefieldoldtimers.org

POSTHUMOUS AWARD

Jack MacDonald

Helping youth in many ways

Few people have ever spent as much time taking part in and supporting Ridgefield athletic teams as Jack MacDonald. Not only was Jack involved in sports with his seven children, he also coached his grandchildren and their friends.

Over the years, Jack was involved with at least ten different athletic organizations in town. For many years he ran the two-day Westmoreland Olympics maintaining impeccable records on famous yellow legal pads. He was a long-term president of the Westmoreland Homeowner's Association.

A great supporter of the Ridgefield Boy's and Girl's Club, Jack was both president of the organization and on the board of directors. He also liked to volunteer to referee basketball as a volunteer for the Boy's and Girl's Club. In addition, Jack was constantly seen as a referee for the Men's League in town and the Townies basketball program.

Then too, he organized and facilitated the Parks and Recreation Town Basketball Tournaments and was the first co-president of the RHS Rebound Club. For all his work in town, Jack was awarded the highly esteemed Distinguished Service Award by the Parks and Recreation Department for his years of work with committee youth. For years Jack coached Little League Teams especially when his five sons were playing. When his grandsons came along, he returned to the dugout of the Danbury Youth league Baseball to coach them as well. There was nothing more that Jack loved than being involved in sports. He was even buried in his Ridgefield Tiger's Sweatshirt and named his dog after a basketball coach from Notre Dame.



Jack MacDonald

Jack grew up in the Norwood section of the Bronx. He was a 1952 graduate of Cardinal Hayes High School and a 1956 graduate of Iona College in New Rochelle, N.Y. After college Jack served for ten years in the United States Marine Corps, retiring with the rank of Captain. Next in line for Jack was a special assignment in Washington D.C. assisting their legal department with an antitrust lawsuit. After leaving the military Jack climbed the corporate ladder as a sales and marketing executive for 28 years at Kraft/General Foods, focusing on the Maxwell House brand. After retiring from General Foods, Jack continued as a consultant for Fresh World, Campbell Soup, and Johnson and Johnson among other companies. As a retirement job, Jack also became the VP of Strike Ten Entertainment, part of the bowling industry. Jack was always in great demand.

Jack's second love was athletics, his first love was his family. Married to the wonderful Pat for 50 years, Jack and Pat loved to travel and socialize. Their busy lives centered on family events, athletic games, plays, dance recitals, birthdays and other celebrations, graduations, their friends, their pets, and church. With seven children and their spouses and nineteen grandchildren and counting, the MacDonald house was always filled with love and laughter.

Jack has also left a great legacy with three sons playing college basketball, one son being a college coach, and grandchildren that are even more athletic and taller than their parents. Whether you call him Jack, Jack Mac, Pop, Gramps or Grandpa, Jack will remain one of the greats in the world of Ridgefield athletics. —*Darla Shaw*



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ARTS AWARD**Tina Cobelle Sturges, '76****An artist of vibrant pictures**

Tina is R.O.T. A's first female Artistic Award winner and so deserving of the award. She has lived in Ridgefield since age three and has distinguished herself as a diverse and multifaceted artist equally comfortable with figurative and abstract modes of expression with her joyous use of color and space, unique narrative, purity, and complex painterly techniques.

Tina is working most recently on abstract works in pure abstraction and abstract landscapes. She has painted many New York City scenes, landscapes, and paintings that have helped community causes visualize themselves as part of the arts. Painting in oil, acrylic and watercolor, Tina's vibrant painting of Ridgefield's Main Street and her significant work on the Porches of Ridgefield are widely known through the community. These works have now become limited editions.

**Artist Tina Sturges**

Tina's passion for her Ridgefield community and its traditions and people are shown through her art. Her paintings are researched, detailed, and capture the spirit of the town.

Much of Tina's artistic work for Ridgefield and various community groups has been done gratis and as a form of fund raising for worthy causes. The impressive Vietnam War Memorial Mural in the Ridgefield Town Hall is one of Tina's donated works. She has also donated paintings to Kids in Crisis, Sunrise Cottage, RVNA, Ability Beyond Disability, Lounsbury House, Keeler Tavern, the Ridgefield School System, the League of Women Voters, Ridgefield Playhouse, various scholarship foundations, Founder's Hall, Play for Pink, and many other organizations.

Tina works collaboratively on many projects, joining with the American Artists Group, The Aldrich Museum, Keeler Tavern Museum, the Ridgefield Guild of Artists and



Detail from 'Porches of Ridgefield,' by Tina Cobelle Sturges

various other organizations. She just completed a 48" X 60" painting for the RADical Hope Foundation, an organization dealing with suicide prevention. It provides programs that improve the lives and future of young adults. This foundation needed a symbolic painting to not show the outward appearance of things, but the inward significance. With this painting Tina was very successful in representing a myriad of feelings along with radiating positive energy, vitality, and spirit. One might also notice a dancer or moving figure amidst an ocean of color, or maybe it is not a dancer but the music itself. Tina's vibrancy of energy, her musical rhythms and movement have a lot of symbolism – it signifies joy of life, hope and internal peace.

Tina's works of art are shown at the Geary Gallery in Darien, Ridgefield Guild of Artists, RPAC Gallery (Main Street Ridgefield) and Visual Impact/Impact Arts Gallery in Danbury. One woman shows include Keeler Tavern Museum, The Frame Barn, Sarah's Wine Bar and Cultural Alliance of Danbury. Tina has also been an active board member and provided leadership for the Ridgefield Guild of Artists for many years.

Tina was inspired to become an artist by her father, Charles Cobelle, a prolific and internationally known painter. Charles studied in France with Chagall and Dufy and was best known for his paintings of Paris and who is regarded as one of the last links to the Open Line School of Paris. For her 20th wedding anniversary, Tina was able to visit the many French locations of her father's paintings. In addition to studying art with her father, Tina has taken many art classes over the years at the Silvermine Guild, the Ridgefield Guild of Artists, Wooster School and with well-known painters such as Daniel Greene.

Tina graduated from Ridgefield High School in 1976. In her junior year, she met her future husband, Don. They have been living and married for forty-two years in Ridgefield.



Main Street, Nantucket, by Tina Cobelle Sturges

They have three grown sons who are all artistic and good with design and construction like their father. Each son has his own specialty and Tina is very proud of them.

After graduating from high school, Tina attended Katharine Gibbs School and worked at the Perkin-Elmer Corporation all while continuing to paint and improve her artistic skills. Tina knew from a young age she wanted to paint. Her advice to young people today, “Always be your true to yourself. Do not be afraid to explore new techniques and ideas when painting or creating. There will be days you are not happy with the outcome of a piece, but keep at it. The journey in working in all mediums and using different techniques is most important because it is where you learn the most and are able to find your true expression as an artist.”—*Darla Shaw*





Scott and Amy Russell with Congressman Jim Himes in Washington.

SPECIAL AWARD

Scott and Amy Russell

A pro-active pair fights Alzheimer's

Twelve years ago, Dr. Scott Russell, was officially diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's and had to leave his high-powered executive position in human resources. Knowing that his disease would progress more rapidly if he denied his problem or gave into the disease, Dr. Russell decided to be as pro active as possible. He is now an amazing role model as he reaches out to others in the community with various types of dementia, Alzheimer's being the most common.

Believing that healthy eating, exercise, mental stimulation and socialization would help to slow down the devastation of the disease, Dr. Russell continued much of what he had previously been doing prior to Alzheimer's and looked for new, workable alternatives. Since math had always been

his specialty and he had lost most of that ability, he decided to focus on other areas where he was still competent. Since he had the ability to speak and write, along with an amazingly positive attitude and an acute sense of humor, Dr. Russell joined and was then appointed to the Executive Board of the National Alzheimer's Association. He then became their featured speaker for early onset Alzheimer's patients for many years. Early onset can start in the 20's, but usually starts in a person's 50's.



The Russells and their Alzi Animals at an Alzheimer's Walk at Calf Pasture in Norwalk.

In addition to traveling all over the United States to speak at various walks, lectures, black tie events and other fund raisers, Dr. Russell also started an Alzheimer's in the School Program for children in grade three and up. Along with a person who explained the brain on Alzheimer's, and a caregiver, Russell talked to the local students about what some of their relatives might be experiencing and how they could help them. The students also became involved in various projects with Alzheimer's and loved his book, Silly Mr. Scott, a story loosely based on his life and written by a group of high school students. There was also a catchy song to go with the story which the students sang with glee. Due to the uniqueness of this student-based activity, Dr. Russell received

many awards for the program and always commented that the best and most honest questions he ever got were from students.

Even before going into the schools, Dr. Russell had decided to collect stuffed animals of all kinds and decorate them for the purpose of raising money for Alzheimer's. This project was a great success and the school students and the people at the fund-raising walks always looked forward to purchasing his animals. For Dr. Russell, making and selling the special animals was a way of keeping his mind and hands actively involved.

To make each day special, Dr. Russell not only talks to various groups, but he likes to play soccer with a much younger team of men. They like him on the team because he is a good soccer player and really cares nothing about the score. Dr. Russell also likes to ski, snowboard, hike, travel, and split wood.

Beside being on all sorts of Alzheimer Association Boards, both national and local, being the walk chairman for many events, and working with Alzheimer's support groups, Dr. Russell is head of the Poppy Committee for the American Legion, and a Spirit Handicapped Ramp Builder. In 2012 Dr. Russell was named by the American Red Cross as the Western Connecticut Hero of the Year for his selflessness and compassion for Alzheimer's.

Dr. Russell's wife, Amy, is also of great assistance to the Alzheimer's cause. Amy is a well-known jewelry designer who regularly creates special Alzheimer's pieces and donates them to the cause. Amy also helps to keep Scott active as both mental and physical activity seems to be the key for some to maintaining a productive life. —*Darla Shaw*

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Amy and Scott Russell

For their continued work in spreading awareness and hope in the fight against Alzheimer's disease.

*With love and appreciation,
The Alzheimer's Association Connecticut Chapter*

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Bill Owens and granddaughters.

POSTHUMOUS AWARD

Bill Owens

Dedicated to community service

Bill Owen's wife, Regina, is being presented with the Ridgefield Old Timer's Posthumous Award for 2022 because of her husband's constant dedication to athletics and service to the Ridgefield community. He will always be remembered for his sense of humor, generosity, supportive and approachable nature, and dedication to all of his endeavors.

Bill was an Arkansas boy who got his undergraduate degree in chemical engineering from the University of Arkansas. While at UA, Bill was a middle distance track and cross country runner. Bill then went on to get his doctorate in chemical engineering from the University of Oklahoma.

After obtaining his degrees, Bill went to work in a variety of positions for Texaco. When he was assigned to

work in White Plains, N.Y., Bill moved to Ridgefield, Ct. It is here that he raised most of his children; Ashley, Penny, Mike and Candy. Candy become quite a track star like her father.

For the last 18 years of his life, Bill was a cherished coach/ assistant coach of the Ridgefield track and cross country teams. He coached both the girls' and the boys' teams. While coach of the boys' track team in 2000, the team won the Class L State Track Title and came in second place for FCIAC and the State Open.

Being a chemical engineer, Bill was very analytical and used this skill in his coaching. He was great at analyzing mobility and movement, crunching the numbers, developing drills, setting up relays, and setting personal goals. Once Bill analyzed a student's performance he was able to closely work with him/her on setting a goal and obtaining that goal.

Track and cross country athletes who remember Bill, talk about how he was able to build their level of confidence along with skills. His athletes remember how his funny and serious stories could lift their attitude, help alleviate stress and enhance performances. Bill was also present at an athlete's field hockey or soccer games when they were not competing in track. Even when Bill was too ill to coach, he attended meets whenever possible.

To show their devotion to Bill, fifty member of the Girl's track team sponsored a virtual run to honor their favorite coach. Their goal was to raise \$2,000 for the health care workers in Danbury and Norwalk Hospital where Bill had been treated for cancer of the brain. In May of 2020, the girls quickly raised \$2,300 and are still continuing with the fund raiser.

Bill Owens did not just make an impression on track or cross county athletes, he was also a dedicated member of Jesse Lee Memorial Church where he was on numerous church committees. He also took part in ASP (Appalachian Service Project) for 13 years and was an active member of the Spirit Ramp builders for handicapped individuals all over Connecticut.

So many young men and women in Ridgefield looked to Bill Owens for his leadership skills. He became a role model for these young people. Bill showed them that you get the best out of people from supporting them, never giving up on them, treating them respectfully and showing them how very proud you are of them. —*Darla Shaw*



Mike Bellagamba at St. John's.

SPORTS AWARD

Mike Bellagamba, '88
Pro catcher and NYPD officer

Mike Bellagamba is being honored for his athletic ability in the 1980's, both in baseball and football at Ridgefield High School. He was one of the few in Ridgefield able to sign with a professional team, the Los Angeles Dodgers, and play four years of minor league baseball.

Mike is as Ridgefield as you can get. His parents, Dick and Marilyn, met in Ridgefield High School and married shortly afterwards. They had three girls and then Mike, the baby. Dick went on to become Ridgefield's police captian and Marilyn worked in the nurse's office at Ridgefield High School. In 1999, twenty-one years ago, Dick Bellagamba was also recognized by the



ALL SEASON COMFORT

Ridgefield Old Timer's for his athletic ability.

The Bellagamba family remembers that as Mike was learning to walk, he was tossing a ball in his hand. All he ever wanted to do was throw a ball. He was constantly throwing balls against the house and driving everyone nuts. More than anything, Mike loved to play baseball with his father.

As he grew older, Mike played Little League Baseball, Youth Football and Youth Basketball. He played on numerous Little League championship teams and all-star teams over the years. These early years in baseball were preparing him for his future.

In Ridgefield High School, Mike played both varsity baseball and football for three years. His senior year he was captain of both teams. In 1988 he helped lead the RHS varsity baseball team to an FCIAC Championship. It is now 30 years later and no RHS baseball team can claim that victory. Mike also received first team baseball All State and All FCIAC Honors his senior year. He was most proud of being named a New York Daily News Baseball All-Star as well as a Connecticut Baseball All-Star.

Mike particularly remembers Mike Baker, whom he played baseball with back in second grade and Mike Scott whose father, Dave, was the person in town who probably loved baseball more than anyone else. Mike is still in touch with most of the guys in RHS that he played baseball and football with over the years. He felt very fortunate to have grown up in Ridgefield.

Mike went on to a full athletic scholarship to St. Petersburg Junior College in Florida and then onto another full scholarship at St. John's University in NYC. He was a



Mike with the LA Dodger organization.

member of the St. John's 1993 Big East Baseball Championship Team which finished the season ranked 14th. nationally among Division I Schools. Mike was then named as a first team All-Big East Conference baseball player. He was then tied for second place all-time at St. John's with a career .370 batting average and a single season best of .425 batting average.

After college Mike signed a minor league professional baseball contract with the Los Angeles Dodgers and played for four years. He loved baseball and he had certainly given it is all. For a while after baseball Mike became a professional trainer, but then decided to go into criminal law and justice like his father.

Mike has now been with the NYC Police Department for 17 years in Manhattan. He has worked with many units including the anticrime division and the special victims unit. Since going to college in NYC, he feels he has a better fit working in NYC than in a small town like Ridgefield.

Now a resident of Patterson, N.Y., Mike lives with his wife, Jill, and has three sons, with the youngest being eleven and the oldest in college. The youngest son seems to be the one with the most potential when it comes to baseball. He continually wants to be have a ball in his hand and be coached by his dad. Sounds like he may be a mini – Mike in the making.—*Darla Shaw*



NYPD Officer Mike Bellagamba and wife Jill.



Sarah Townsend Pomposello on the slopes.

SPORTS AWARD

Sarah Townsend Pomposello, '90

Hometown soccer and skiing star

Sarah is a hometown girl brought up in the Ridgebury area with her two sisters, Rachael, class of 1992 (living in Montana) and Elizabeth, class of 1996 (living in Ridgefield). Sarah's family was all about sports for all three of their exceptionally athletic girls.

At age 5 Sarah started soccer and from age 6 to age 18 Sarah remembers getting packed into the car every weekend and going to ski at Stratton Mountain when there was snow. She never once remembers getting cold. She also remembers that her family was always first on the lift in the morning and the last on the lift at night.

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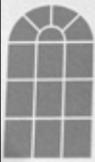
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of Ridgefield athletes!**

When Sarah was not on the slopes at Stratton she was on the East Ridge Middle School travel soccer team for South Western Connecticut. She was also on the District Select Team for soccer and the Olympic Development Program of Connecticut for several sports.

Sarah graduated from Ridgefield High School in 1990 and played varsity soccer under Phil Santoro for three years. While playing soccer her varsity team was the state runner up team for two years. In the winter Sarah was on the varsity ski team for four years with Peter Nichols. She was the captain for two years and was on the team when they won two state championships. In 1990 Sarah made the All-State Ski Team.

Sarah continued to ski for four years at the University of Rhode Island. She was captain for one year and skied in the USCSA McBrine Division. While in college she also played intramural soccer and was a member of Sigma Delta Tau Sorority.

After obtaining her undergraduate degree, Sarah got her MBA at Sacred Heart University and returned to Ridgefield where she became extremely active. She became the House and Travel Team Coach and Manager for the Ridgefield Soccer Club, was Co-Chairperson of the Columbus Day Soccer Tournament, team manager for Youth Lacrosse and active at St. Stephen's, directing the children's choir and teaching religious classes.

To keep herself physically active, Sarah became the president, the team manager and a player on the Nutmeg Women's Soccer League. She also became a ski coach and ski partner for people with special needs for three years. She is now the Catamount Alpine Race Team Coach and has been in this position for eight years. Sarah is a certified level 200 ski race coach.

For the past 25 years Sarah has been the director of E Commerce for Beiersdorf Skin Care Company, the largest skin care company in the nation. Her focus is on sales and she loves what she does.

Sarah is married and her two daughters, Sophia (sixth grade) and Aveline (eighth grade), are following closely in their mother's footsteps. Both girls are already playing club and travel soccer for the Connecticut Football Club, and are members of racing team at Catamount. Aveline has won too many awards to name and was involved in the U14 tristate ski championships as well as the U14 regional finals. Both girls

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also play lacrosse for Western Elite Lacrosse.

Sarah's girls have inherited her humanitarian spirit and started their own ski goggles collection program during the pandemic. The COVID Response Project was called Goggles for Doc and sent goggles to doctors in need when the pandemic first started. When Sophia and Aveline saw a need that they could fulfill they stepped up to the plate and created their own program.

Sarah cannot say enough about the wonderful friendships that she developed through her athletics in Ridgefield. To her it did not matter if the team won or lost, but it was the support system, the bus rides, the camaraderie and the challenges that brought people together, not just at the time but for years to come. Sarah was also so glad to have sisters with whom she shared her athletics and now she has two girls that are doing the same.—*Darla Shaw*



Sarah today.

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2022

Ridgefield Old Timers'

Honorees

The Rowella Family

SPORTS AWARD**Patrick Cozens, '83****Native son and football standout**

Patrick was a Ridgefield native and the youngest of six. His brothers and sisters were: Tim, Peter, Mike, JB and Kate. JB Cozens still lives in Ridgefield with his wife, Connie, and their five children.

Growing up Patrick played Pop Warner Football and Little League Baseball, from tee ball to the majors. During his years in Ridgefield, Pat attended Farmingville Elementary School, Veterans Park Elementary School, East Ridgefield Middle School and then Ridgefield High School (graduate of the class of 1983).

At Ridgefield High School he played freshman and JV. baseball, but his real love was football. Pat was a standout in football. In his senior year he was named first team All-State by the Coaches Poll. He was also named to the second team, All-State by the Sportswriter's Poll. In addition to this Pat was named FCIAC First Team in his senior year.

His record for interceptions in a season was 7; for interceptions in his varsity career, 11; his longest punt return touchdown was 83 yards; and his record for a punt return touchdown in a season was 2. His strongest memory was his senior game against Darien where he made the interception that helped to tie the game.



Pat was on the Coaches' All State first team



Pat had seven interceptions in one season.

Patrick remembers Coach Scalzo and Coach Maiolo. Since he put so much time working at Touchstone's Restaurant, Patrick was not able to participate in as many sporting events as he would have liked.

After high school Pat attended the University of Rhode Island and then returned to Ridgefield. From 2005 to 2007 he then coached girls' soccer with Terry Hughes. They coached both the regular and travel team for the Recreation Center. His girls were on the team at the time.

Out of his nine children, Patrick says his girls are the most athletic ones in the family. They are the ones on the varsity soccer and travel teams.

Since 2007 Patrick has been living in North Carolina, mostly in the Charlotte or Raleigh area. He works in marketing for a software company and is the father of six girls and three boys, ranging in age from 14 to 30. He also has one grandchild. To stay in shape Patrick runs regularly, but triathlons and marathons are now a part of his past athletic endeavors.

Patrick feels fortunate to have been brought up in Ridgefield where he had so many good friends, good coaches, and opportunities. He has nothing but the fondest memories of Ridgefield High School. —*Darla Shaw*

SPORTS AWARD**A.J. Martinich, '76****He grew up on the diamond**

AJ and his family of seven came to Ridgefield in 1962. He loved living on Limestone Road and attended both Ridgebury Elementary School and St. Mary's. He thrived in his neighborhood with lots of kids, whiffle ball, softball, pickup basketball, and fishing at the lake across the street. He was never indoors.

You could say that AJ grew up on a baseball field. His dad, Tony Martinich, a former professional baseball player in the Pittsburgh Pirates organization, coached Babe Ruth teams in the 60's and 70's. When AJ was young he was the "bat boy" for his dad's teams and spent countless hours fielding ground balls and chasing fly balls with the older boys his dad was coaching. AJ's family bonded over baseball.



AJ was an RHS and a college star.

In youth sports AJ started out playing basketball at the Boy's Club and then participated in Townies basketball and Little League. While pitching for Bissell Pharmacy as a 12 year old in Little League, he once faced 18 batters in a six-inning game and struck out 17.

In Babe Ruth baseball AJ was the Rookie of the year and MVP of the league as a 13 year old. He repeated these accomplishments as a 14 year old. This was the first time a player won these two awards twice in a row.

At Ridgefield High School AJ played on both the freshman and JV baseball team as a freshman. He was then a starter on the varsity for the next three years. As a sophomore AJ led all the FCIAC second basemen with a .996 fielding percentage capacity. He was named to All-FCIAC team again in his junior year.



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In his senior year AJ was the co-captain of the team and led the team to its first post-season state playoff game since joining the FCIAC conference. As a senior AJ batted .406 and was selected as the First Team All-FCIAC shortstop. This was the first time a baseball player from RHS was selected on the All-FCIAC First Team since they formed the WCC and went to FCIAC. One of AJ's most memorable games was against Westhill when he hit a single, a double, a triple and a home run.



AJ as a young batboy.

In college AJ was a “walk on” at Seton Hall University. Here he was one of the few freshman who often traveled with the varsity team until he was sidelined with an injury for the remainder of the year. AJ did continue to play with Seton Hall for the next three years and was invited to try out for the Texas Rangers in 1981.

When AJ did not make the Texas Rangers team, he put all his efforts into a career in business. He has worked in sales for a number of well-known companies. He particularly liked working for Perrier Mineral Water as he was able to take advantage of running the NYC Marathon as part of his job. AJ has also worked with Bell-Carter Foods, Nestle Waters, and Mantrose-Haeuser. Today he is VP of sales and marketing for Polyvinyl Films. They are a family owned company whose brand of plastic food wrap is considered the best on the market today.

AJ and his wife, Janine, have been married for 27 years and live in Easton, Ct. They have two sons, Andrew, a junior at Fairfield University and Peter, a junior at Joel Barlow High School. While his boys were in Little League, he was a coach and served on the Board of Directors for Little League in Easton. He was on the Board of Directors for 12 years. AJ now serves as vice chairperson of the Easton Parks and Recreation Commission. AJ is proud of the fact that he came from a strong sports orientated family and that he has continued this tradition. He also says the Martinich Family will always bond over baseball —*Darla Shaw*



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SPORTS AWARD**Miles Tullo, '90****A love of hockey and helping**

When Miles was five years old, his family moved from Missouri to Ridgefield and his skating career began at the Winter Garden in Ridgefield. Miles is still skating at the Winter Garden but also with a variety of other senior men's teams. Next year he plans to join the Olde Crabs at the Danbury Ice Arena.

During Mile's early years he loved the out of doors and did a lot of hiking. He also played Pop Warner Football and Little League Baseball. However, his real love was hockey and in high school he devoted his entire time to this sport. Graduating in 1990, Miles played varsity hockey for three years and was the captain of the team for his junior and senior years.

During his years Mile's team won local championships, but not the state. Miles also achieved FCIAC status with his coach being ROTA's own Gregg Hutchings.

After high school Miles took a PG year at Mt. Hermon Prep School and then went on to play hockey for one year at Babson. After getting his undergraduate degree, Miles went on to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to get a graduate degree from Kenan Flagler School of Business.

With his business degree, Miles achieved much success. He has been director of new business development for United Systems Integrators, Senior Vice President for National Accounts for Mastercard, Executive Director for Chase Global Commercial Card, Strategic Leader for G.E. Capital, Marketing Manager for Steelcase, Founder of



Miles as a Tiger.

Haviland Funding, Area Manager for Chase Bank, and is presently Managing Director of Banking and Payments for J.D. Power and Company. In addition to his extensive business career, Miles has found time for a variety of service endeavors. Some of these include being president of the R.H.S Boys Hockey Booster Club and teaching Lasting Leadership for Her Honor Mentoring. In addition to these activities Miles also



Miles Tullo and son Ryan, who also played hockey at RHS.

served on the Board of Directors for the Boys and Girls Club of Ridgefield for eight years, works as a volunteer for World Team Sports for Athletes with Disabilities, and was an adult volunteer for Appalachia Service Project at Jesse Lee Church. Miles has lived in Ridgefield most of his life and was happy to do so. He has two sons in college, one at UCONN and one at the University of Michigan. His wife of 24 years, Linda, is an accountant. One of his sons is a hockey player and the other is a soccer player. His oldest son, Miles, recently won the John Ward Award for outstanding service to the Appalachia Community.

Being very proud of his parents, Miles said they both gave back so much to the community. His father locally coached sports in town for both girls and boys. He also initiated the Scholarship fund and tournament in honor of Eric Hoag who was an exceptional hockey player who died in a car accident. Mile's mother ran the Locker Room, Ridgefield consignment shop for sporting goods. She knew how expensive equipment could be and wanted to make certain students were not kept from participating in a sport due to lack of equipment.

Today in addition to giving back to the community and spending time with his wife Linda and family, Miles loves to travel, hike and take part in outdoor activities. He is a part of the Dot and Bill Doty's Extreme Hike Group that takes on great hiking challenges. He has hiked in the U.S., Canada, South America, Australia, and New Zealand, and in February hopes to hike in Patagonia. No challenge is too big for Miles Tullo. —*Darla Shaw*

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Four Seniors Earn Scholarships

Four Ridgefield High School seniors will receive scholarships from the Ridgefield Old Timers Association

“Emily Fox, Eric Pereira, Josiah deGrasse, and Alyza Crook will continue the ROTA tradition supporting exceptional student athletes who are also civic-minded with dynamic personalities,” said ROTA Chairman Mark Lionetti. Some 60 students have earned ROTA scholarships in recent years.

A native of Canada, Emily Fox arrived here from Montreal in the summer of 2018. “Growing up in Canada, I didn’t know much about American high schools other than what was depicted on screens in movies and TV shows, and I was nervous to be thrown right into it,” she admits. “Freshman year was a very unique experience as I tried to adapt to the new changes.”

Obviously she was successful. She has been on the RHS High Honor Roll all four years and is an A student. Coming from the colder climate of Canada, it’s perhaps not surprising that Emily has been a member of the junior varsity and varsity ski teams at RHS — she was the most improved member in 2022.

But she has also found time to volunteer in many community endeavors, including Meals on Wheels, cleanup programs at the Episcopal and Methodist churches, and at the Jesse Lee “pumpkin patch.” She’s also spent four years as a member of a local Boy Scout troop — yes, Boy Scouts — where she has worked with what she calls “strong, intelligent



Emily Fox

and kind young women,” and now, as a Life Scout, she has been teaching younger scouts and spreading the “Ridgefield spirit.”

“Being in this community has taught me the importance of many values such as cooperation, courage and kindness, but most notably it has helped shape me into an effective and empathic leader.”

And if that’s not enough, she is co-owner and founder of Goodthings Organics, a small skincare business. She plans to attend the University of Guelph in Ontario.

Eric Pereira is not just a Ridgefield native, he’s the son of two Ridgefield High School graduates! “They made a conscious choice to settle in their hometown because they wanted my brothers and I to have the privilege of growing up in Ridgefield, and I will always be grateful that they made that choice for us,” he said.

But Eric didn’t just grow up here, he has contributed to Ridgefield in many ways. He’s been a volunteer with SafeRides and SPHERE where he teaches music to special-needs adults — he plays double bass in the RHS Symphonic Orchestra. He has gone on four Appalachia Service Project missions, has been an acolyte and volunteer at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church, and worked with YoungLife camps.

A longtime hockey player who has traveled to Denmark, Germany and elsewhere to play, Eric also teaches the sport, helping children learn to skate and play the game. And he has his own landscaping business.

Eric plans to enroll in the Honors Program at Xavier University where his older brother Jack, is a junior.

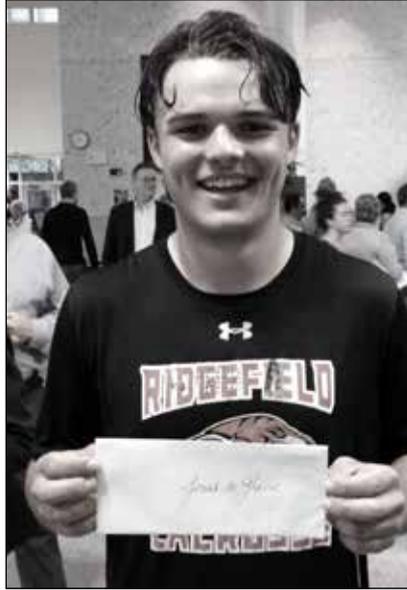
Ridgefield, says Josiah deGrasse, “has shaped me as a person.” He grew up in neighboring Lewisboro but it wasn’t until he came to Ridgefield for his freshman year at RHS that



Eric Pereira

he developed into a serious student and athlete. “The great thing about Ridgefield,” he said, “is that I was surrounded by a culture of hard work, like-minded people, and supportive teachers.”

One result has been four years on the High Honors roll and many fine report cards. It has also allowed him to pursue his love of lacrosse. He started playing Prime Time Club Lacrosse in 2012, and has been on the RHS varsity men’s lacrosse team all four years — he’s captain this year. In addition he has played with the USA Box (Indoor) Lacrosse Team. He also volunteers at youth clinics for lacrosse and as a game referee.



Josiah deGrasse

Though he’s a Ridgefielder now, he hasn’t lost touch with Westchester, and has been a volunteer at the Bedford Historical Society for four years.

Josiah is planning to attend Tufts University.

“Ridgefield has shown me the beauty of being human,” said Alyza Crook. While living here has had its ups and downs, in the end, “Ridgefield has taught me to be strong and vulnerable, and I would not trade that for anything.”

Ridgefield has also encouraged her to help others in many ways. As a Girl Scout for 15 years, she has been involved in countless public service projects and has earned the Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards. She has been a volunteer for the Ridgefield Library’s summer reading program, serves as a peer model for RHS’s Unified Sports team (playing basketball with kids who have special needs), and has been a mentor for Ms. President US, working with girls in elementary and middle school to “help them find their voice, become leaders and make a positive impact for their community.”

She herself is a leader. For instance, she is co-founder and president of RHS Sings, a club that encourages more people to participate in music, especially singing. She is a four-year member of the Madrigals Acapella Group, and has played in the Wind Ensemble for the same period. She has been selected for regional and state music events, such as the Connecticut Music Educators Association All-State Festival, and has earned the “Outstanding Arts Award” from the Connecticut Association of Schools.

Alyza plans to attend McGill University in Montreal.



Alyza Crook



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4 year Scholarship

Carolyn Donovan

Tom Belote Memorial Scholarship

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Olivia DeStefano

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Amos Grey

4 year Scholarship

Aarov Patel

Tom Belote Memorial Scholarship

Past Old Timers' Awards

Posthumous Awards

1994: Ralph Crouchley, Kip Holleran, Francis Martin; 1995: Chuck Walter, Charlie Ashbee, Frank Minnerly; 1996: Lou Girolmetti, John Sullivan, John Bacchiochi; 1997: Lick Santini, Red Delugo, Bill Allen; 1998: Joseph Venus, Art Sfondrini, Bob Stolle; 1999: Alan Crowley, Don Ligos, Harold Hilton; 2000: Art Bellagamba, Stubb Cummings, Margaret O'Sullivan; 2001: Tony Deluca, Walt Ryba, Bob Seymour; 2002: John Sturges, Jimmy Warner; 2003: Scott Nye, Fred J. Romeo, Sr., Mario Scala; 2004: Steve Lancaster, Bernie Leighton, Pete Carboni; 2005: Charlie Ritch; 2006: Roy Cogswell, Hank Wilson; 2007: Tony Del Biondo; 2008: James Principi, Jeanne Timpanelli; 2009: Bradford Mortensen and Edward Zandri; 2010: Richard Ligi, Richard McGlynn, Richard Serfilippi; 2011: Robert J. Morganti, Erik Hoag, Andrew Lecher; 2013: Gary Beaudine; 2014: Harold Finch, Percy Marshall Bouton; 2015: Stephanie Boles-Kavanagh; 2016, Tom Belote; 2017, Doris Ventres; 2018, Jack Herr; 2019, Steve Carboni,

Civic and Special Awards

1992: Richard Venus; 1993: Bob Tulipani; 1994: Beth Yanity; 1995: Aldo Tulipani; 1996: Ferdinand Bedini; 1997: Matty Pambianchi Family; 1998: Dr. Peter Yanity; 1999: Charles Coles; 2000: Kitty Rosa; 2001: Lewis Finch; 2002: Edith Meffley; 2003: Kay Ables; 2004: Chuck Dean; 2005: Doug Main, Renee Franks; 2006: Jack Sanders; 2007: Ancona Family; 2008: Maureen Kiernan, Dave Scott; 2009: Vincent Pannozzo, Jeanne Cook; 2010: Christine and Philip Lodewick; Chuck Camp; Reed Whipple; 2011: Mary and Nelson Gelfman; Terry Hastings. 2012: Martha and Dave Campbell; Joseph Consentino. 2013: Richard and Deirdre Aarons; George Besse 2014: Darla and Ben Shaw; Joy and Hank Kutcha; Joyce Ligi; 2015: Liz & Steven Goldstone, Bill Craig; 2016, John and Elaine Couri; 2017, Janice Pauly; 2018, Barbara Manners and Eugene Healy 2019, Peter Seirup, Mike Bedini.

Educator Awards

2013: Dr. Harold E. Healy and Dirk Bollenback; 2014: Dr. Philip Pitruzzello; 2015: Bob Cox; 2016, James Muraski; 2017, Joan Voss; 2018, Bill Monti 2019, Bob McDonald.

Arts Awards

2019, Kevin Briody.

Sports Awards

1992: Tabby Carboni, Lynce Carboni, Leo Pambianchi, Tom Clark, Charlie Frattini, Joe Forcelli, John Carboni; 1993: Gene Casagrande, Bob Mulvaney, Vin Petrini, Charly Stolle, Joe Tulipani; 1994: Lyman Anderson, Harry Bennett, Aldo Girolmetti, Evo Principi, John Tulipani; 1995: Peter Casagrande, Dino Cincolani, Joe Brunetti, Ray Eppoliti, Bud Mahoney, Reno Severini; 1996: Ben Bedini, Fabio Biagiotti, Jack Leary, Harold Mead, Romeo Petroni, Janalie Severini; 1997: Primo Baldaserini, Dante Brunetti, Frank Lancaster, Sr., Walt Evans, Navio Ligi, Fred Mazzi; 1998: Gino "Jinx" Baldaserini, Dr. Phil Martin, Dr. Joe Moylan, Andy Montanari, Julius "Bugsy" Santini; 1999: Dick Bellagamba, Si Bellagamba, Gene Lavatori, John Lavatori, Gene McMahon, Harry

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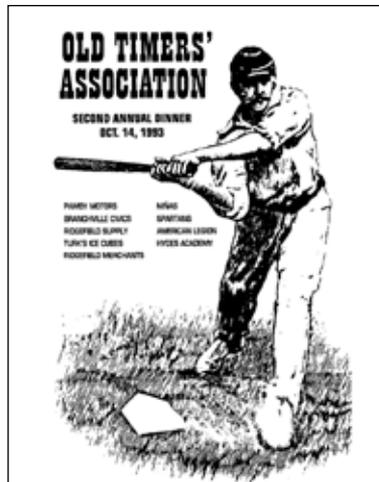
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Pierandri; 2000: Glen Anderson, Bill Elliot, Booker Jackson, Tom Mitchell; 2001: Ned Carboni, Paul Carboni, Jim Costanzi, John Fossi, Artie Frattini, Nick Reid, Gloria Sharkany; 2002: Ed Dowling, Jack Jones, Jack O'Keefe, Jim O'Keefe, Mike Ryba, Aldo Travaglino, Harry Zandri; 2003: Aldo Biagiotti, Chip Bliss, Bob Carboni, John Forcelli, Jim Mullen, Vince Paccadolmi, Fred Romeo; 2004: Faust Verna, Lou Bellagamba, Chip Salvestrini, Alley Frulla, Rudy Marconi, Jim Tulipani and the CYO Girls Championship Basketball Team; 2005: Tom Cesca, Tom Santini, Richard Polverari, Bob Pambianchi, Gregg Hutchings, Carol Torcellini, Dave Campbell, Bill Polverari, Renzo Falcinelli, Jimmy Bacchiochi; 2006: Larry Bossidy, Jr., Isabel Caporale, Frank Lancaster, Jr., Carl Scala, John Stolle, Dave Sturges; 2007: Dave Landers, Jay Contessa, Chip Dean, John Devendorf, Marie Frulla, Steve Martin, Alan Wallace; 2008: Richard Lavatori, Judy Laslo, Craig Saltzgaber, Frank Serfilippi, Paul Vaughn, Chip Wilson; 2009: Robert Leary, Robert Lewis, Patricia Girolametti, Richard Miller, Peter Santini, Michael Principi, and Dr. Richard Scala; 2010: Abe Morelli, Tom Fossi, Michael Bowman, Amy Fredericks, Christopher Winnes, Janel Jorgensen, Michael Dell'Aquila, Tony Wilmot; 2011: Lee Pasquarella, Harland Brooks, Janet Yanity, Harry Geary, Thomas McDonald, Joseph Korczynski, Lea Ann Schmidt, Gary Bellagamba; 2012: Michael Conroy, Anthony James Forcelli, Beth Ondrick Gattey, Terence Hughes, George R. Mulvaney, Phil O'Brien, Walt Valentine; 2013: William 'Sandy' Allen, Paul Bossidy, Dorene Almgren DeCecco, Mike Harris, Mike Maiolo, Ed Stone, Nicole Colanari Twomey; 2014: John Lorenzini, Peter Stuart Jomblett, Brian Sullivan, Thomas Scala, Sandy Beal Carpenter, Nicole Muschett DiAntonio, Neil Ringers; 2015: Don Innamorato, Richard Dingee, Susi Mang McDonald, Guy Welton, Karen Dingee Leibowitz; 2016: Al Diniz, John Kreisher, Jack Hughes, Jim Croce, 1967-68 Football Team, Chip Wood, William Van Orman, Cliff Onolfo, Gary McMorran Leavey, Sue Ellis; 2017, Dr. Joseph Connelly, Nancy Ruhl Hurley, Bo Beatty, Danny Geary, Amy Walter Hillenbrand, Dr. Theodore Librizzi; 2018, Stan Engelhardt, Bob Phalen, Mike Bossidy, Lena Onyshkewych; 2019, Bridget Stearns, John Hughes, Kevin Morris.

Ridgefield Old Timers Association: *Honoring Ridgefielders since 1992*

About 30 years ago, a group of friends got together with the idea of forming an old timers group for Ridgefield. Paul Baker, Julie Petrini, John Tulipani, and Joe Brunetti met at a dinner and decided to model the new organization after old timers groups in Danbury and Norwalk, which had honored several Ridgefield athletes over the years.

The original purpose of the new organization was to honor great athletes who were unable to continue their education past their school days, and set up a



The 1993 dinner program cover.

scholarship to assist current athletes. The organizers held several meetings and drew in 18 other supporters. They elected a board of officers with Paul Baker as the first chairman. Walt Evans was elected treasurer, and Julie Petrini, the first secretary.

The Ridgefield Old Timers Association began to have awards banquets in October 1992. Seven Ridgefielders were selected to be the honorees and the first Special Award went to Richard E. Venus. The first scholarship recipient was Thomas B. Gareau. He had been accepted at the University of Virginia.



The guest speaker at the first banquet was Spec Shea, a pitcher for the New York Yankees. The advertisement book for that first gathering was only 20 pages, cover to cover. The event was a success and money was put into a scholarship fund.

The first award of the scholarship to a female Ridgefield High School graduate occurred in 1996. Janine Murphy was involved in three sports and many civic endeavors. A year later, it was decided to annually award scholarships to both male and female recipients, and the winners in 1997 were Charles Bliss and Kerry Bennett. The amount of the scholarships has grown over the years as a result of the advertising placed in this book, as well as other fundraising efforts — especially the annual golf outing and pig roast, which took place in June at the Ridgefield Golf Course.

In the association's second year, it introduced the Civic Award, and the first recipient was Bob Tulipani. The next year, Beth Yanity became the first female recipient of the Civic Award. In 1999, Sandy Pierandri Warner became the first female member of the board of directors; she was also the association's third secretary.

The motivational guest speakers, once thought necessary for a good event, began to make the banquets stretch late into the evening. Members and guests wished to hear more from the award winners. After the event ran until 11:10 p.m. in 1999, the association decided to drop the guest speakers and to feature the honorees, as well as the emcee, often founder Paul Baker, who had a long career as a radio and television broadcaster. In many later years, Tom Belote was emcee.

The Ridgefield Old Timers Association has continued to meet annually in October to honor athletes and others, and to award scholarship. In 2006, the bylaws were updated to allow Ridgefield residents who have lived here at least 25 years to become members. Before this, members had to be natives and/or graduates of Ridgefield High School. And to paraphrase the United States Marine Corps, "we are always looking for a few, very good, hard-working new members."

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