Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation
Awards Banquet and Hall of Fame Induction
Sunday, April 8th, 2018

2018 ACBF Hall Of Fame INDUCTEES

JESSICA CANCEL
(1999 - Ashtabula)

JESSICA OLMSTEAD
(2002 - Conneaut)

DAN COXON
(1995 - Conneaut)

STEVE KRAY
(1997 - Edgewood)

WAYNE GAMES
(1976 - Geneva)

JIM PINNEY
(1958 - New Lyme)

BEKKI HAMPER
(2000 - Jefferson)

RICK BERRIER
(1981 - Jefferson)

AL SIDBECK
(1966 - Harbor)

ROD BROWN
(1980 - Pymatuning)

OFFICIAL PROGRAM
Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation

2018 Awards Dinner
Sunday April 8, 2018
3:30 p.m Doors open / 4 pm Dinner and Ceremony
New Leaf Event Center
110 Gateway Ave - Conneaut, Ohio

Program

National Anthem
Invocation                Pastor Scott Walsh
Welcome                               Brad Ellis
Banquet Dinner                      Phil's Catering
Introduction of All-County First Teams
Coaches and Foundation Nominees       Andy Juhola
ACBF HOF Inductees                         Dave Miller

Presentation of Awards

Edward Jones/David Flautt Scholarship   David Flautt
ACBF Coaches’/Referees’ Award            Dawn Zappitelli
ACBF Alumni Achievement Award            Steve Kray
ACBF Officials’ Appreciation Award       Phil Garcia
ACBF Coach of the Year (Girls)           Melody Nowakowski
ACBF Coach of the Year (Boys)             John Higgins
ACBF Player of the Year (Girls)           Doug Hladek
ACBF Player of the Year (Boys)             Bob Hitchcock
ACBF Special Award                        Brad Ellis
Closing Remarks

Melody Nowakowski
John Higgins
Phil Garcia
Chris Larick
Doug Hladek
Bob Hitchcock
Al Goodwin
Becky Olmstead
Dawn Zappitelli
Ed Armstrong
Andy Juhola
Steve Kray
Ralph Turk
Tim Mizer
Michael Bartone

Trustees

Michael Joslin
Nicholas Iarocci

Ashtabula County Coaches

School
Edgewood
Conneaut
Geneva
Lakeside
Grand Valley
Jefferson
Pymatuning Valley
St. John

Girls
Paul Stefan
Tony Pasanen
Nancy Barbo
William Isco
Kim Triskett
Steve Lopy
Jeff Compan
Nick Iarocci

Boys
John Bowler
Tim Tallbacka
Shane Clugh
Rob Pisano
Justin Turk
Rob Faulkner
Ryan Shontz
Curtis Turner

Board of Directors

Brad Ellis
President
ABCF HOF Class of 2018

Steve Kray
Jessica Cancel
Al Sidbeck
Rick Berrier
Jim Pinney

Page 4  Dan Coxon
Page 5  Rod Brown
Page 6  Jessica Olmstead
Page 7  Bekki (Hamper) Starr
Page 8  Wayne Games

ABCF HOF Inductees

Class of 2018
Steve Kray
Jessica Cancel
Al Sidbeck
Rick Berrier
Jim Pinney

Class of 2017
Carlos Aponte
Steve Carlson
Shelly Burns
Bob Farl
Rhea (DeJesus) Greene
Nara (DeJesus) Skipper
Brian Turner
Ali Miller
Denny Sabo
Paul Erickson
Ron Weaver
Ken Taft

Class of 2016
Pete Candela
Kay Ann Fails
Kenneth Green
Boyd Griffith
Sam Hands
Terrence Hanna
Jemal Harris
Kelly Kapler
Lori Korver
Brad McNeilly
Lou Pavolino
Al Runyan

Class of 2015
Dan Craft
Kelly Easton Zirzow
Kristal Henson Force
Doug Hitchcock
Jennifer Johnston Horner
John Kampf
Bill Kaydo
Kiki McNair
Bob Naylor
Dana Schulte
Ron Silvieux
Bob Spencer
Dave Tirabasso

Class of 2014
Jim Adams
Mike Blauman
Tim Bower
Nadine Cox
Jonathan Freeman
Sean Freeman
Heidi French
Phil Garcia
Dave Golen
Ray Harriman
Clyde Koski

Class of 2013
Eddie Kropf
Laura Silvieux
Jim Welty, Jr.
Jim Welty, Sr.
Jim Gilbert
Steve Hanke
Jim Henson
John Higgins
Richard "Dick" Hill
Kelly Hitchcock
Tiffany Leonard
Carl McLinhan
Vonnie Meola
Angela Miller
Tom Naylor
Hiram Safford
Al "Red" Schubert
Carl Stokes
Micky Zigmund

Class of 2012
Lori Belongis
Jim Chiacciero
Dutch Cotton
Brad Ellis
Jon Hall
Gordon Hitchcock
Eugene Miller
Steve Oman
Lyle Pepin
Jeff Puffer
Jerry Puffer
Dave Sillanpaa
Charles Watson

Class of 2011
Bill Broskey
Jeff Cicon
Larry Cumpston
Chris Hammon
Kim Hitchcock
Jim Landis
Deora Marsh
Leo Mucci
Joe Rich
Tim Richards
Norm Urcheck

Class of 2010
David Benton
Russell Bethel
Donna Gregg
Heidi Litwiler
Maurice McDonald

Class of 2009
Phil Miller
Jim Osborne
Ernie Pasqualone
Fred Scruggs
John Wheelock
Jim Bradley
Bill Brainard
Kelly Henson
Scott Humphrey
Billy Johnson
Kelly Johnson
Randy Knowles
Larry Lattimer
Bruno Mallone
Bob Miller
Karl Pearson
Tom Rizzi
Ken Smith
Martha Spinneweber

Class of 2008
Ed Armstrong
Denny Berrier
Don Canelli
Tammy Church Hagstrom
Al Goodwin
Adam Holman
E.J. Kinleyside
Gary Kreilach
Chris Larick
Steve McHugh
Ron Richards
Joe Shantz
Chuck Stevens
Kim Triskett
Trish Wolf

Class of 2007
Dale Arkenbarg
Jim Dolan
Bob Fenton
Paul Freeman
Tom Henson
Tom Hill
Fred Hirshimaki
Jim Hood
Traci Hozian
Don Marsh
Robert Puffer
Pat Sheldon

Class of 2006
Di Anthony
Kelly Boggs

Class of 2005
Jim Cordell
Dan Foster
Ronnie Hanson
Harvey Hunt
Jay McHugh
Ray Peet
Tonya Tallbacka
Eleanor Young
Tammy Busser
Robert Cevera
John Coleman
Sheilie Crandall
Harry Fails
Chris Fitting
Henry Garvey
Charles Hirshey
Melody Holt
Randy Linsted
Richard Scribben
Frank Zeman

ACBF Player of the Year Nominees

Conneaut

Lakeside

Edgewood

Jefferson

Geneva

Pymatuning Valley

Grand Valley

St. John
Opportunities are rare in Ashtabula County for students who graduate from college, then try to find a job here. But 1997 Edgewood graduate Steve Kray really wanted to live in this area, particularly in the Buckeye School District. So he made it happen.

Kray, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation on April 8, loved growing up in Edgewood. “I was given every opportunity,” he said. “My father owned his own business. I helped in the summer, but he never made me work on a regular basis.”

To Kray, the Buckeye community, moreso than most places, was a sort of Camelot or Eden. That’s why, in his opinion, he sees old teammates in this area often. “I work with Kevin (Andrejack) and see many former teammates on a regular basis,” Kray said. “Edgewood is unique in that. I graduated in 1997 and my son is in middle school here. A lot of kids who were raised here come back here.”

People tend to stay in Buckeye, too, one of the reasons the Warriors develop chemistry by having one or two classes make up the roster of athletic teams on a yearly basis. The kids Kray started playing with at a young age were the same ones he graduated with.

That group includes good friend and point guard Scott Runyan, the son of Kray’s high school coach, Al Runyan. It also includes Bibler, Ryan Lenci, Curtis Colby, Chad Weagraff and Shaun Vencill.

Kray became a 1,000-point scorer. Only three Warriors have, and two of in the past 10 years, have accomplished that feat.

That’s because at Edgewood, you wait your turn. Kray and his teammates followed teams that included fine players like Don Palm, Joel Lapham and Ryan Watts, a year ahead of Kray’s class. When their turn did come, Kray and his teammates made the most of their years, winning 15 or 16 games as juniors, when Kray was first-team All-Ashtabula County and All-NEC with 17.3 points per game and 43 three-pointers.

The Warriors im-proved to 19-3 their senior year, winning the Northeastern Conference championship, while scoring 79.4 points per game.

It was the first Edge-wood boys basketball title since 1986.

Individually, Kray led the area in scoring with 23.3 points per contest, in free-throw shooting with 83 percent and in 3-pointers with 48. He was selected Player of the Year in the NEC, in Ashtabula County and in the Northeast District and First-Team All-Ohio in Division II.

To Kray, winning the NEC that year was meaningful since Madison, Riverside, Harvey and a strong Har-bor team, in addition to individual stars like Rashad Wells, Ryan Turner and Todd Estok, were in the league at that time.

Kray credits his coach, Al Runyan, who was named All-Ohio Co-coach of the Year in 1997, with much of his success.

“He was such a big part of my life since I was seven years old,” Kray said. “I first started playing sports with soccer at the Y and Little League baseball. My mom (Tina) and dad (Steve) both...
Cancel a 1,000-point career scorer at Ashtabula High

BY CHRIS LARICK
sports@starbeacon.com

Led by the all-time leading girls basketball scorer in Ashtabula County High School history Diane Davis, the Ashtabula Panthers girls team had four girls players score 1,000 points or more.

Two of them — Davis and Eleanor Young — were on the same team. The third, Angela Miller, graduated in 1995.

Then, Jessica Cancel took over as Ashtabula’s go-to player.

Cancel eventually scored 1,169 points, which ranks second in Ashtabula High School girls baseball history, between 1996-99.

She will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame on April 8.

Cancel began her organized career while in the seventh grade.

“I really did not have any interest in playing before then,” she said. “I would see my three brothers playing all the time, but my parents would not allow me to play with them because they played too physical. Also, because of my religion, I was not allowed to wear pants and it was too hard to play in a skirt.”

Bill DelPrince and Frank Knudsen were Cancel’s early coaches.

She praises them highly today.

SEE CANCEL, 17
Older brothers a big influence on Sidbeck at Harbor High

BY CHRIS LARICK
sports@starbeacon.com

At 6-foot-2 1/2 Al Sidbeck was no threat to Ashtabula 7-footer Jim Gilbert inside the foul line.

But Harbor coach Ed Armstrong had a solution.

“Ed told me, ‘Sid, I want you at the free-throw line, facing the hoop,’” Sidbeck said. “But don’t shoot. If (Gilbert) comes at you, pass the ball off to John Bucko or John Palo for a layup.” It worked to perfection. One of those guys would come across, get the ball and put it in.

“But one time I found myself wide open. I forgot about his wing span. When I went to shoot, he swatted the hoop,” Sidbeck said. “I told you not to shoot.”

Sidbeck, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame on April 8, was one of the leading scorers on that 1965-66 team. Sid Beck decided to concentrate on basketball and played junior varsity as a sophomore and varsity his last two years of high school.

“Tough,” he said of his position. “I could shoot from the outside and play a little inside, however Ed (Armstrong) needed me. I loved passing the ball.”

Sidbeck, one of the few players of his time to play wearing eyeglasses, started with Harry Bourdeau, Bucko, Bob Bernardo, Brian Salmen, and Greg Schillo. Underclassmen on the team included Dave Dixon and Dale Soderstrom.

“We had a fairly big team, at 6-8, 6-3 and 6-2,” Sidbeck said. “But we had to play Conneaut, which had Ron Richards at 6-4 and Greg McGill at 6-8 and had Andy Garcia as its coach.

“That was a good team. Edgewood had Danny Foster, Fairport had Mike Thomas and Jim Gilbert was at Ashtabula and Don Condon at St. John’s.”

Harbor played in the Western Reserve League when Sidbeck was a junior, but changed to the Northeastern Conference his senior year.

“Geneva and Conneaut were the teams to beat in the NEC,” he said. “Geneva had (Larry) Cumpston and (Steve) McHugh. I didn’t consider myself a great basketball player just one who competed against some great ones.

“We played Friday and Saturday nights, so it could be an ugly weekend if we lost both games. We were in the middle of the pack somewhere.

St. John was tough and Jefferson had Stan Bielech. Top to bottom, everyone was tough.

Sidbeck liked the camaraderie with playing area teams.

“That was nice for the kids,” he said. “It was a great atmosphere. Everyone knew each other. We’d see each other on the street. I still know a lot of good friends that I played against. That’s not going to happen when you play Youngstown Boardman.”

Sidbeck earned all-conference and all-city awards and possibly all-county.

His biggest game was a 27-pointer against Erie Academy, a team coached by Ashtabula’s city manager, CD Lambah’s brother.

“They were a little rougher, committed a lot of fouls,” Sidbeck said. “I bet over half my points were on foul shots. We started my senior year 4-0.”

Sidbeck’s father, Henry, was a hard worker who attended just one of Al’s games, a contest against Conneaut.

“We were losing by eight or nine points with a couple minutes left and my dad left,” Sidbeck said. “We came back and tied the game upon then won it in overtime.”

Sidbeck remembers another game his brother, Bobby attended, a game officiated by Red Morgan.

“After the game my brother Bobby, who graduated in 1955 said to Morgan, ‘You stunk when I played and you still stink.’”

Sidbeck recalls the Mariners breaking a sectional scoring record at Ball Gymnasium with more than 80 points. Mentor then broke that record the following week.

After Harbor began his senior season 4-0, the Mariners ran into Jefferson, which successfully froze the basketball.

“Ed kicked the bench over the brand of basketball they were
During the 1960s and 1970s, basketball spectators were not treated to the spectacle of thunderous slam dunks. That's because the collegiate NCAA banned the dunk in 1967 and high school rule makers followed suit. The ban lasted until 1976, when the dunk was allowed once again.

In the NCAA's words, the slam dunk “was not a skillful shot,” and the rules committee said they issued the ban partially to avoid injuries. The ban lasted until the 1976-77 season.

During that time, players had to drop the ball delicately through the hoop after soaring well above it. North Carolina State's David Thompson, one of the greatest dunkers of all time, played all of his college career during the ban.

The fact that many spectators had never seen a slam dunk probably helped make Jefferson forward Rick Berrier popular. Berrier delighted in soaring in and slamming the ball through the net.

“If I remember correctly, those were the first years it was legal in Jefferson,” Berrier said.

Berrier will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation's Hall of Fame on April 8. While his reputation as a dunker is not the reason for his induction, someone might point out that it didn't hurt.

The 6-foot-4 Berrier used the dunk for a few seasons before graduating in 1981. He played forward on a Falcon team coached by Rick Nemet and also included Don McCormack at point guard, Randy Roach at center, Scott Brainard at shooting guard and John March at the other forward.

Other players on the team included Hugh Goodall and Bob Carlson.

“Rick Berrier was one of the greatest kids at driving the baseline,” Nemet said. “He got a lot of points because of that. He didn't get blocked too many times. Those kids made it kind of easy for me to coach.”

Nemet singled out that group, especially Berrier, McCormack and Brainard, for their hard work.

At that time Jefferson played at what is now an elementary school, the basketball court was on the auditorium stage, and for some reason, the team wasn't allowed to practice there in the summer.

So the Falcons built an outdoor court. The athletic director bought paint and brushes and Berrier, McCormack and Brainard painted all the lines on the court — the foul line, the sidelines, etc.

Jefferson had just graduated a good team that included ACBF Hall of Famer Chuck Stevens and Nate Wilson and not much was expected of the Falcons those two years.

“Everyone thought that Jefferson wasn't going to win,” Nemet said. “But they were a hard-working group. We won the league when they were juniors and finished second as seniors.”

SEE BERRIER, 18
NEW LIME TOWNSHIP — How Jim Pinney found the time to accomplish everything he did at Deming High School (closed in 1973) is a mystery.

Pinney, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame on April 8, played basketball for four years, baseball for three and ran track for two between 1955-1958, the latter his graduation year.

He was also in chorus for two years, a class officer as a freshman and senior, in the class play as a junior and senior, a student council member as a senior and worked on the class yearbook and on the newspaper staff his junior and senior years.

On the court, Pinney was just one of two returnees for his senior year, alongside senior guard Duane Carr.

The Rangers didn't fare well that year, especially since only their tallest player was Tom Lautanan at 6-foot-2. He was the only taller than 6-0.

The other starters of the Deming squad, which was coached by Ron Mahon, a Thiel College graduate, were chosen from a group that included George Skleres, Russ Otto, Ron Lipps and Ron Turner. Other players on the team were Chet Paul, Charles Prosser, Bob Gray, Dan Boyle, Keith Palmer, Paul Piontkowski, Paul Olah and Walter Barnes.

Though the Rangers struggled that senior year (1957-58), winning three of nine games this reporter was able to find box scores for, Pinney was a standout.

He ranked third in County League-scoring (to Conneaut’s Harry Fails and Grand Valley’s Lou Bishop) with 281 points in 15 games, an 18.7 average.

Pinney scored 25 points against Kingsville, 23 against Rock Creek and 22 against Austinburg, his best performances.

In a track meet that year, he won the 220-yard dash in 29.7 and finished second in the 100-yard dash.

After Pinney graduated, Kent State’s Ashtabula campus opened and Pinney joined the only the men’s basketball team, teaming with Lennie Czuchra, Paul Olah, Jack Incorvia, Gary Mizer and Brian Gaines.

On his first day at Kent, Pinney met Nancy Halleen from Ashtabula.

“I noticed his smile and red shirt and the Love Story began,” Nancy now says.

The couple married on Dec. 12, 1959 and enjoyed more than 56 years of marriage before Jim’s death from cancer on Aug. 7, 2016 at the age of 76.

“Jim always worked,” Nancy said. “He worked at a gas station then Easton Brothers and Easton Excavating while in high school. He then worked for the New York Central Railroad for a short time. When they started Easton Culligan, he worked first delivering, servicing tanks then as a salesman for Culligan.

“He then went to work at Mayfran in Mayfield, a steel belt conveyor plant where he was a supervisor. He worked there about 29 years until he retired in 2002.”

In addition to playing basketball at Kent after graduation, Pinney enjoyed drag racing at Howland Raceway, where he drove a 1956 Ford Continental he called “The Golden Rod” and won many trophies.

Jim’s sister, Carol Porter, remembers how he walked from Deming to his home so he could play basketball and take part in all of the other activities he participated in high school.

In addition to Carol, Pinney had another sister, Gladys, who lives in Buffalo, Ohio and a brother, Mark Rex in Ashtabula. Pinney’s siblings remember him as working hard to achieve goals, especially buying his yellow Chevy ragtop convertible.

Pinney also was a manager of the Little League in Colebrook, Ohio for eight years, helped with 4-H (horses) and enjoyed golf and all other sports. After he retired, Pinney loved riding his motorcycle.

He was also an Awana Leader at Bethel Bible Church and a member of Gideon’s, speaking at churches and donating Bibles to hospitals.

Other activities he favored were travel: to conventions with Culligan, Kelleys Island with family and friends, camping at Easton’s Lake, vacationing in North Carolina with his family and Niagara Falls with his grandchildren. Pinney always had animals, including horses, cows, pigs, chickens, cats and dogs, while living in New Lyme and Colebrook.

“He loved nature,” Nancy said.

“Jim worked hard and taught his children to work hard, use their imagination and innovation to accomplish a task. Jim sacrificed by making a long drive to work every day so his family could be raised in the country. He had fun building forts with his kids, inspired imagination and was always available to his grandchildren to discuss their thoughts and, of course, politics.”

Jim Pinney, who died in 2016, is shown with his wife, Nancy. Pinney will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation during the award banquet and ceremony on April 8. He starred for Deming High School’s 1957-’58 team.
Coxon part of Conneaut trio to score 1,000 career points

BY CHRIS LARICK

As a high school and college basketball player, Dan Coxon played with and against the best of the best. These days he is more likely to be dealing with the worst in his role as an FBI agent in Las Vegas.

Coxon, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame on April 8, was a key member of the 1993-1994 and 1994-1995 Conneaut Spartan squads that lost a combined one regular-season game.

He, along with teammates Mike Pape and Tony Lyons, made up a trio of 1,000-point scorers — the only time in county history that has happened. Pape, who scored 1,166 points and Lyons, who notched 1,026, are sure bets to join Coxon (1,065 points) in future years.

“Mike Pape (the inside force on the team) is perhaps the only player I know who had 1,100 points and 1,000 rebounds in high school,” Coxon said. “He was one of few freshmen who were physically able to be able to play at the varsity level.

“Tony played power forward, but he could shoot from the outside or do anything you asked. He was one of the best players who ever played at Conneaut. He was the sort of player who could do almost anything.”

Coxon described his own role on the team.

“I always had to guard the other team’s best player,” he said. “I took pride in doing that.

“I tried to be the leader of the team, scoring was not my main focus, I tried to do whatever the team needed to win games. My coaches use to get mad at me for not shooting enough. I tried to be a team player and I was happy to have a lot of assists and steals. I was a two-year captain my junior and senior seasons.”

Coxon was also a first-team All-Ashtabula County and All-Northeastern Conference selection as a junior and senior and a second-teamer his sophomore year.

The Spartans were coached by Greg Mason when Coxon was a freshman and sophomore.

When Mason fell into the bad graces of the board of education, Kent Houston took over the reins for his last two years.

“They were very different as coaches,” Coxon said. “Coach Mason was more in-your-face, a little more vulgar. Coach Houston was more by the book. They approached the game differently.

“Houston was much more structured than coach Mason. But both were very good coaches.”

A basketball team needs more than three players and the trio of Coxon, Pape and Lyons had plenty of help, including Tom O’Connell, Chris Anthony, Jason Tharp, Nick Armeni, Joe Swigunski, Brant Kananan and Travis Hayes, plus, in their senior year, big Jeff Grubke.

“Everyone looks at Mike, Tony and I, but we had other contributors,” Coxon said.


“I would say our biggest competition was Riverside and Harvey,” Coxon said. “At Edgewood, Ryan Ball had a good season my junior year, but most teams were not too much of a problem.”

The tournament was another problem. In Coxon’s junior season, the Spartans drew powerful Cleveland St. Joseph’s.

“We were outmatched. They beat us by 30-some points,” Coxon said.

The following year,
Family played a vital role in Rod Brown’s athletic success

BY CHRIS LARICK
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As is true at a lot of small schools, athletic success at Pymatuning Valley High School has always been a family affair.

One extended family — consisting of Hitchcocks and Browns — is a typical example.

Bob Hitchcock, one of the founders of the Laker athletic legacy in the Andover area, was the first to receive county-wide acclimation in the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame’s original class in 2003. Gordy Hitchcock, who played on the same undefeated high school basketball team with Bob, was selected to the ACBF’s Hall of Fame in 2012.

Bob’s children, Kelly and Doug, were inducted into the ACBF’s Hall of Fame in 2013 and 2015, respectively.

Their first cousin, Greg Brown, was chosen for the Ashtabula County Touchdown Club’s Hall of Fame last December.

Now it’s Greg’s brother, Rodney’s time.

Brown, a 5-foot-10 shooting guard, got his start in athletics in the usual way.

“My brothers and sisters were playing,” he said. “It was just from there.”

Concerning organized basketball, that happened for Brown in the fourth and fifth grade. His first cousin, Doug Hitchcock, played on his teams, along with players like Jason Poole.

When that group became seniors, they did something that hadn’t been done in Pymatuning Valley since their coach, Bob Hitchcock, had been in school — win all of their regular-season games.

That group included Brown, Doug Hitchcock, Gordy Hitchcock, Poole and Sean Freeman.

“I was the leading scorer with around 17 points a game,” Brown said. “I was all-conference and started as a junior.”

Bob Hitchcock desired Rod Brown as the ultimate team player.

“Fortunately for his coach and the players around him,” Hitchcock said. “We ended up with a pretty good year, won 20-plus games. We had a good point guard (Doug Hitchcock) and two good shooters in Rodney Brown and Sean Freeman.

“He was called on to guard one of the better perimeter players on the team, which he did a pretty good job of. My son, (Doug Hitchcock) and he went at it in practice. You always improve with competition and they worked on that. He did a great job and was never a problem, he was a very quiet player. He wasn’t much for words but had a lot of action.”

Brown added, “Bob was a very good coach. He knew all the X’s and O’s. He had Robert Faulkner come in and help us.”

Of games he remembers, Brown lists those with Jefferson, (“a tough team”), and the contest that ended their winning streak and season. It was a narrow loss to Hawken in the tournament.

“We had a memorable year, but got disappointed by O.J. McDuffie in overtime in the tournament,” Hitchcock said.

Brown also played wide receiver in football under Brian Cross, when the Lakers went 9-1, and the following season for Ken Parise, during an undefeated season. Additionally, Brown played second base and shortstop for PV.

“I wasn’t bad, but not real good,” Brown said of his baseball ability.

After graduation, Brown drew some interest from small colleges, but decided not to go.

“I did some lawn care for about six years,” he said.

He has since entered the dairy farming family business. The Brown farm at one time had 125 acres and it’s a lot of work.

“I get up at 4 (a.m.) and get done at 12 at night,” he said.

Brown married Stacey, whom he met at PV and is year younger.

Their blended family includes four children, including two of his and two of hers. They are Joshua, 30; Dustin, 27; Adam 25, and Kelsea, who graduated from PV two years ago as a 1,000-point scorer.

“She played center her senior year and point guard her junior year,” Brown said.

Joshua has five children of his own — Kylee, 13; Bryce, 9; Brylee, 5; Brynlee, 3; and Brycen, 10 months.

Bob Hitchcock remembers
Olmstead had a key role in Conneaut hoops success

BY CHRIS LARICK
sports@starbeacon.com

Ironically, the basketball play that Jessica Olmstead remembers the best from her high school years was one in which she had little input.

During the 1999-2000 basketball season, the Spartans were in a battle with the Jefferson Falcons for leadership of the Northeastern Conference, a spot the Falcons had controlled for several years.

But with Olmstead, then in her junior season, panning the way, those two teams were tied for the league lead when they faced off in Conneaut.

“I remember we were tied with about six seconds left in the game,” Olmstead said. “Kelly Herb passed to Aimee Soller for a last-second layup to win the game.

“The last time we won the NEC was in 1985. Geneva upset Jefferson later in the season so we won (the NEC championship) outright. We knew that going into our last regular season game, so we just needed to take care of business. We had to beat Harbor and we did. Jefferson had been so dominant with Kelly Kapferer and Bekki Hamper. We didn’t have a lot of height that year, but were very guard-oriented.”

Perhaps the most surprising part about Conneaut’s win that year is that Soller, not Olmstead, scored the winning basket.

Olmstead, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation’s Hall of Fame on April 8, was by far the team’s leading scorer.

She finished her career with 1,682 points, which ranked second in county history at the time.

Olmstead demonstrated her basketball skills at an early age, participating in the Elks and Knights of Columbus Free-Throw Competition.

“My parents (Mike Olmstead and Kathy Hawk) would drive me all over Ohio,” Olmstead said.

She also participated in the Conneaut recreational leagues. It wasn’t long before Olmstead and her friends — Char Kudlock, Stefanie Brown and Nikki Sanford — were competing for Conneaut school teams in basketball and softball.

“When I was in middle school, we won the seventh grade league championship,” Olmstead said. “I was one of the shorter players then. I had a growth spurt in the 10th grade, but in middle school I played point guard.

When I got to high school I played primarily on the wing. I could be more versatile because I had handled the ball as a point guard.”

Olmstead and her teammates had a connection with Tom Ritari, their coach, early.

“I played for him in high school for all four years, but I knew him from summer camps and open gyms,” she said. “As an incoming freshman I was super shy.”

Ritari is already a member of the ACBF’s Hall of Fame.

Shy, but talented, Olmstead started for the varsity that year on a squad with no seniors and also included Jennifer Johnston, Annie Soller, Jamie Snyder and Erika Loomis.

Olmstead averaged 12.7 points a game on a team which finished about 22.9 points per game.

By the time she was a senior, Olmstead’s average had jumped to 22.9 points per game.

Conneaut improved as Olmstead and her teammates matured. In her junior year, the Spartans won seven or eight straight games, beat Jefferson, and clinched the outright championship against Harbor. The following season, Conneaut was even better, going 21-3, winning the NEC title outright and advancing to the regionals, the first time in school history that happened.

“We were coming off a state Division II softball championship (2000). We had momentum and were thirsty for success,” Olmstead said.

But the Spartans had an off-game and lost in the regional basketball semifinals to Avon Lake at Barberton.

“I shot poorly from the field that night. I wish I could have that game back,”

SEE OLMSTEAD, 20
Hamper followed in sisters’ footsteps at Jefferson

BY CHRIS LARICK

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After learning how to play basketball on a gravel driveway court, Bekki (Hamper) Starr was pleasantly surprised when she began playing in the Jefferson High School gym.

“Imagine my surprise when I started playing fifth and sixth grade basketball on Saturday mornings in the high school gym, and the ball actually bounced up in the exact spot I initially dribbled it at, instead of bouncing any-which-way like it did when I dribbled on the gravel driveway,” Hamper said recently. “Good times.”

Starr followed sisters Pauline, Francine and Margaret onto the Jefferson Lady Falcons team.

“As a typical younger sibling, I wanted to do what they did, wear what they wore, act like they acted, listen to music they listened to,” said Starr, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation’s Hall of Fame on April 8. “So, I capitalized on any opportunity to shoot hoops in our gravel driveway with them (and any of our other siblings who would play).

Speaking of that driveway, my dad painted the most awesome ‘Jefferson Falcons’ backboard for us, it’s still there at my parents’ house, standing proudly in the driveway. So I wanted to be like my sisters, and really enjoyed participating in the fifth- and sixth-grade basketball program at the high school.

“There was a traveling team at the time, I believe, but family responsibilities didn’t allow for me to participate. I did compete in several Knights of Columbus Free Throw Competitions as well, and won several times in my age category.”

Starr, a 2000 graduate, went on to participate in Jefferson’s fifth and sixth-grade, all of the time absorbing his coaches’ information. By the time she reached the seventh grade, Starr had an absolute hunger to participate.

“I absolutely couldn’t wait to play in seventh grade,” she said. “I have such fond memories of hanging out with the team after school waiting for the bus to take us to Rock Creek Elementary to practice. Coach (Al) Graper was such a great coach, really concentrating on helping us master the fundamentals. I can still hear him shouting/repeating ‘Ball, you man’ as we practiced our ball-handling.

“And then the dark, wintry Saturday mornings in the high school gym, and the Falcons went undefeated in the seventh and eighth grades, the latter year being coached by coach Thompson.

“He built on what coach Graper had taught/instilled in us,” Starr said. “We continued to solidify our individual and team strengths. I have fond memories of this season as well; practicing on the always slippery MPR floor, hating my basketball shoes (which my parents had bought for me in seventh grade and still fit and were in good condition in the eighth grade, so I had to wear them again.

“When I ran down the court, they made horse-trotting noises … gosh I hated those shoes … and they were black, and coach (Rod) Holmes commented/teased several times when he would come to our practices to watch and hate for a bit, that black basketball shoes were a big no-no, and building friendships and teamwork.

At 6-foot-1, Starr was one of the tallest players in the area. She was joined Kelly Kapferer, the other ‘twin tower,’ who went 5-foot-11 or 6-0, at Jefferson.

That pair, together from the seventh grade through high school, joined upperclassmen Kiki McNair, Kelly Crowell and Laurie Gregg, when they reached ninth grade. The two freshmen (Starr and Kapferer) were in their glory and learning from the others, whom they had watched and admired since the seventh grade.

“I remember fouling out my very first varsity game, and I think I scored 10 points and took down some rebounds,” Starr said. “But I just remember being so

Jefferson graduate Bekki (Hamper) Starr (right) is pictured with her husband, Sam Starr; son, Gabriel and daughter, Madelyn. Starr will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation during the awards banquet and ceremony on April 8.
There are almost 40 Ashtabula County boys basketball players who have scored 1,000 points or more during their high school careers. Only one of them, Jay McHugh, hails from one of the county’s most successful schools — Geneva.

The exact reasons for that are complex, but the most likely one is that the most successful Geneva coaches — Bill Koval, Al Bailey and Brad Ellis — hung their hats on defense.

In addition, the Eagle teams were so successful for many years in the final half of the 20th century that players, even good ones, didn’t get to contribute until their junior and senior seasons.

So, selecting Geneva players for the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame takes a little more research than simply looking at the list of highest county scorers developed by Don McCormack and kept updated since then.

This year, that honor falls to Wayne Games, a 1976 Eagle graduate.

Several of Koval’s former players, including his Ellis, his son-in-law and 1977 graduate, followed Koval into coaching basketball. That group includes Games, who served four years at Madison after obtaining his college degree.

“He was definitely a tough coach that knew exactly the style of play he wanted from his teams,” Games said of Koval. “As players we had to be disciplined to get time on the floor. His style was to slow the ball down, mix up defenses and execute a variety of full and half court presses. The year I was a junior we won the NEC (Northeastern Conference) and I believe we had the lowest-scoring offense in the league, but also gave up the least amount of points to opponents. There can’t be more than a couple who’ve led the league in scoring while playing in a coach Koval offense.”

Games will be inducted into the ACBF Hall of Fame during the awards banquet and Hall of Fame induction on April 8.

Games recalls a game when he was a senior in which, while playing a good Ashtabula team, Geneva got a 2-0 lead.

When the Panthers turned the ball over and packed into a tight zone defense, Koval had the Eagles hold the ball at half-court.

Eventually, Ashtabula was forced out of the strategy and it became a four-corners, low-scoring game.

At 6-foot-3, 175 pounds, Games played power forward most of the time.

“Coach Koval gave me the freedom to run the baseline corner-to-corner and break into the high post when it was open,” he said. “The team goal was to always work for the best shot. In practice coach would require us to pass the ball up to 10 times before taking a shot. If you ever got in coach Koval’s dog house all you had to do was pass up an open shot in a game and say you were working towards a better one.”

Like most Geneva players, Games didn’t start as a sophomore, but did as a junior and senior. He played on an NEC championship team with Dan Craine, Rick Gaylord, Russ Clutter, Willie DeJesus and John Montgomery.

“We had some tough battles with Ashtabula and Harbor,” Games said. “(Harbor’s) Jim Bradley was probably the best player I remember facing in high school. My senior year I played with John Montgomery, Brad Ellis, Tony Tersigni and the Hassett brothers (Tony and Mike).

“We didn’t win the league. Our record was probably a little over .500, but we were very competitive and split the regular season with NEC Champs Madison then beat them in the sectionals, winning two out of three.”

In his sophomore year, Games lettered, but only played a few minutes per game.

As a junior, he was an important cog on the NEC Championship team at Geneva. He was selected first-team All-NEC, first-team All-Ashtabula County, and led the team in scoring averaging 14.6 points per game with the second highest field goal percentage in the NEC, behind Russ Clutter.

In his senior year, Games repeated as first-team all-NEC and all-county and
The 2017-18 high school basketball season

Geneva’s Emily Harriman (5), Hope Stanley (21), Jordan Vencill (43) and Miranda Francis (35) defend Euclid’s Constance Chaplin (13) during a girls basketball game in the 2017-18 season.

Edgewood’s Aaron Anderson (facing) and St. John’s Ron Nejbauer battle for the ball in the 2017-18 boys basketball season.

Lakeside’s Courtez Vaughn (2) is fouled by Collinwood’s Trejaun Bester (3) in a 2017-18 regular-season boys basketball game.

Conneaut’s Jayden Drew (4) plays defense against Grand Valley’s Brandy Smith during a 2017-18 regular-season game.
Edgewood’s Tye Rood was selected as the boys Most Valuable Player during the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Senior Classic earlier this month at Edgewood High School.

Pymatuning Valley’s Madison Hurst was selected as the girls Most Valuable Player during the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Senior Classic earlier this month at Edgewood High School.

Edgewood’s Felix Rivera won the boys 3-point shooting contest during Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Senior Classic earlier this month at Edgewood High School.

Grand Valley’s Abby Triskett (right) won the girls 3-point shooting contest during Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Senior Classic earlier this month at Edgewood High School. She is pictured with GV’S Kim Triskett, who coached one of the girls teams.

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And don’t miss our Family Law Seminar Being held at our office on APRIL 23, 2018 at 5:00PM
**KRAY:** Edgewood graduate relishes his roots

worked while we practiced in the afternoon. Al would pick me up and take me to practice. “He was such a positive role model for me. I had him as a teacher and coach. He was everything I wanted to be. I can’t thank him enough. He was a stickler for pushing guys. He encouraged us to be very physical and aggressive.”

In addition to basketball, Kray starred on the baseball diamond under coach Mike Hayes for the Warriors, playing second base and shortstop. His senior year he batted .407, with 24 runs scored, 33 hits (third in county) and 26 RBI (second in county). After the season, he was selected first-team All-Ashtabula County and All-NEC, as Edgewood went 15-5 overall, 12-4 (second place in the NEC).

Kray remembers how good of a pitcher Harbor pitcher Dan Mozingo was.

Dan Mozingo no-hit us once and Harbor won the league,” Kray said. “He went on to play for the White Sox. I don’t know if I ever saw a guy as good as he was. He was nasty on the mound.”

Kray also played with the ARC team that played 72 games, ‘all over the place.’ “Having Al for a coach, we had open gym from 10 to 12, then lunch, then were on the road by four o’clock (to play ARC baseball),” Kray said.

During his senior year, Kray was recruited by Baldwin-Wallace for baseball and Mount Union for basketball.

“I chose basketball,” he said. “That might not have been the best decision for me. I was 6-foot-2 and they put me at power forward. Aaron Shipp was an All-American there at 6-6 or 6-7. I was pretty much a beating dummy.”

Kray played on the “B” squad as a freshman. He broke his wrist in his sophomore year.

“It was a deciding point for me,” he said. “My decision was that it had been a fun ride, but that I would get my schooling in four years and come back here (to Buckeye).”

During Kray’s sophomore year, one of the administrators in the Buckeye system indicated that Kray would have a job waiting for him if he chose to return home after college. And, sure enough, the summer after his senior year he claimed that job.

“I taught everything at the middle school — math, history, five preps (preparations),” he said. “It was a challenge. I was also seventh-grade basketball coach under Kevin Andrejack and junior varsity baseball coach under Ed Pizzuto. After my first year as JV coach, Ed decided to pursue a job in the construction business. I then took over as head baseball coach at Edgewood, a position I held for the next 10 years.”

“(Athletic director) Dave Melaragno decided to retire and I job-shaded Dave in 2010. In 2011 I became assistant principal at the middle school and athletic director (positions he still holds). I love it. It’s a very time-consuming job if you do it right. My children are at my school so they stick around and hang out. It’s very unique.

“I love what I do. There’s not a more true Edgewood person. I know what it’s like to live here.”

Kray met his wife, Nicole, at Mount Union. Nicole won a state softball championship at Marlinton. They have been married 14 years and have two children, Logan, 11, and Carly, 8.

Kray and Kevin Andrejack share the coaching of their combined kids — Andrejack in basketball and Kray in baseball. Nicole works with Carly in softball. Carly is also very active in Wildfire.

As if his job isn’t enough, Kray works with both the Ashtabula County Touchdown Club and the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation in their fundraising activities.

“I play (basketball) in alumni games for fun and go to practices and hit the ball around,” he said. “It’s funny how time flies. It’s a lot of fun, no doubt about it.

“The whole experience (of being athletic director) is very humbling. It’s been 20 years since I’ve been out of high school, but I still see today a lot of the guys I graduated with. I couldn’t have done it without them. Scott Runyan was by far my best teammate. We know each other like the back of our hands. There was a lot of camaraderie. It is great to work with former high school friends Ryan Marcy, Shaun Vencill, and Kevin Andrejack as we coach our own kids. It’s amazing how fast time flies.”

“I can’t thank my family enough. To this day my parents still go to Edgewood games, wear Edgewood shirts, completely support me. The way I was raised, I was always taught to give to others. I couldn’t ask for a better profession to be in. My job is very demanding. I love what I do. My wife allows me to be the best I can be at my job. My wife goes to the games and helps support our various teams. I couldn’t do what I do without her support.”

**SIDBECK:** Harbor grad was one of the leading scorers on 1965-66 team

playing,” Sidbeck said. “They ended up beating us 36-35 or so. Later in the season we beat them about 70-55 at Harbor.”

Sidbeck’s first encounter with Armstrong was unexpected, even an unknown one at the time. Sidbeck was in the habit of playing in his driveway, dribbling his way into the night. When he was in the seventh or eighth grade, a new couple moved in next door.

“Is that young man going to pound the ball all night?” the wife asked.

“Reta, I hope so,” said the husband, Harbor’s new basketball coach, Armstrong.

“Al, that was music to my ears,” Armstrong later told Sidbeck.

“I loved playing for Ed,” Sidbeck added.

“He was fiery, he had a temper. But he knew basketball. You knew that guy was going to try his hardest.”

Sidbeck’s brother, Bobby, is already in the county football hall of fame. Charles, who ran a 4:27 mile in 1952 and a 4:15 in college, will probably be in the track hall of fame.

“I got to rub elbows with the greatest,” he said.

Sidbeck played basketball at Kent State Ashtabula for a year after high school, but couldn’t compete when he transferred to the main Kent campus the following year.

“After college, he played ball with the Reliance Electric team that had players like Jim Hood and Ted Miller. The league included players like Bob Walters, Jim Gilbert, and Jerry Raffenaud.

He received his degree in business at Kent, then went to work at Ashtabula Bow Socket and Reliance Electric.

Sidbeck then worked at Plastics (now Chromaflow) for almost 30 years until he retired.

Sidbeck married Janice, a 1968 Harbor graduate, when he was 26. Although they have no children of their own, the Sidbecks helped raise his nephew, Matthew and niece, Stephanie.
CANCEL: Ashtabula graduate took over as go-to player on late 1990s teams

FROM PAGE 5

“I want to give a huge thank you to Phil Garcia for allowing me to work during my four years of high school.”

Jessica Cancel
Ashtabula High School graduate and ACBF inductee

Cancel has an adopted daughter, Zoe Collazo, 14, in addition to biological children: Angelo L. Collazo 13; Jasmine and Joselyn Collazo, 11 and Anthony Collazo, 9.

Cancel didn’t succeed in just athletics in high school.

“I was not just a good athlete in high school,” she said. “I maintained a 3.4 GPA. I enjoyed doing community service and helping the younger kids in their after-school activities. I want to give a huge thank you to Phil Garcia for allowing me to work during my four years of high school.”

two of four seasons over .500.

In one game against Harvey, Cancel set a personal high with around 43-46 points, while making only 3 of 12 foul shots. In addition to her scoring, she averaged eight or nine rebounds per game.

As a four-year letter-winner, Cancel was honorable mention all-county and all-NEC (Northeastern Athletic Conference) as a freshman, then moved up to second-team status on those squads as a sophomore.

In her junior and senior years, Cancel was first-team all-county and all-NEC in addition to being honorable mention All-Ohio.

She was also Most Valuable Player at the Star Beacon Senior Classic and her team’s MVP.

Cancel also starred on the volleyball court for the Panthers, lettering all four-years.

She was named honorable mention on the all-star teams as a freshman, second-team as a sophomore and first-team all county and all-NEC her junior and senior years.

She was also Ashtabula’s MVP as a junior and shared that honor with Maria Jones as a senior.

As she neared graduation, Cancel was recruited by East Tennessee, Wilmington College and Mercyhurst.

“I decided on Mercyhurst because it was closer to home,” she said. “I had a good experience the time I was there. I met some really nice girls there that I still keep in contact with.

“I wanted to become a high school math or Spanish teacher. I was there for almost a year before I tore my ACL and meniscus. I had surgery and decided to attend Kent State main campus one year and Kent State Ashtabula for two years.”

Since college, Cancel has had a varied work experience.

“Tore a lot when you have five children that play sports or do other activities at school.”

Cancel didn’t succeed in just athletics in high school.

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Remembering Allan Mononen

Few Conneaut residents were strangers to Allan Mononen, a track and field stand-out who also played baseball at Conneaut High School in the late 60s.

Mononen, 67, died in his home of a heart attack Feb. 1.

Mononen was passionate about high school sports. After graduating from Conneaut High School and Bowling Green State University, Mononen returned home and became a substitute teacher. He was also a mentor, participant and an official for numerous community sports teams.

Viewers of Conneaut’s local cable access channel saw Mononen’s work in front of and behind the camera. Mononen spent countless hours at high school athletic events year-round as a sports reporter, photographer, and volunteer videographer. He made sure to schedule morning work hours in order to free his afternoons and evenings so as not to miss a game.

Mononen reported on Conneaut High School sporting events each week on his “Homestown Sports Report” for Conneaut’s local cable access channel, going the extra mile to interview athletes and highlight their successes.

Conneaut’s Local Cable TV Coordinator Regis Galvin called Mononen the community’s “Keith Jackson/Howard Cosell.”

Outside of the sports arena, Mononen was serving his sixth year as president of the Conneaut Cable Advisory Board at the time of his death and was on the board of Conneaut’s First Baptist Church.
BERRIER: Jefferson grad led team in scoring, rebounding on 1979-81 teams

FROM PAGE 7

Al Graper coached Berrier before he reached high school and had recommended him to move up to junior varsity as a freshman. Bob Ashba was his junior varsity coach.

“They were the ones who took me to where I was,” Berrier said. “They were very good coaches.”

As Berrier remembers, the Falcons were a very competitive team in the Grand River Conference, which at that time also included Pymatuning Valley, Grand Valley, Perry, Fairport, Ledgemont and Southington.

“I think Pymatuning knocked us off my senior year,” he said. “I think we tied (for the championship) my junior year.”

According to Nemet, Jefferson won the championship in Berrier’s junior year and PV captured the title at Jefferson in the last game of the senior year.

“(PV’s) Alan McDonald was 6-6 or 6-7,” Nemet said. “PV had some good players.”

Southington, with Rick Badanjek, who later played fullback at Maryland, was also tough, and games with southern Ashtabula rivals PV and Grand Valley were always competitive.

“With PV and GV it didn’t make any difference what their record were,” Berrier said. “The rivalry was magnificent. The gyms would be packed and the fans were vocal.”

Berrier doesn’t remember many of the games, but in one he recalls against Southington, he went up for a dunk and was undercut, suffering an injury in the process.

Like most athletes his age, Berrier learned the sport in informal get-togethers with neighborhood kids.

“We played at night and put a lot of time into it,” he said. “We called it BBY, Berrier’s Back Yard. Kids came over and we played ball.”

Because of his leaping ability, Berrier jumped center, Nemet said.

“He was so thin, but he could do anything,” Nemet said. “He could dunk and had a quick first step, a real good all-around player.”

Berrier recalls being named to the all-GRC and all-county teams as a junior and senior. He averaged more than 20 points as a senior. Berrier led the Grand River Conference in scoring as a junior and senior, totaling 749 career points. He was a two-time third-team All-Ohioan.

Berrier was recruited by several colleges, like Walsh and Akron and several Division III schools, but had little interest in the prospect.

“I didn’t want to carry on in school,” he said.

Nemet added, “Rick had the ability to play in college. But he never had any interest in it. He said, ‘I don’t think that’s for me.’”

Instead, he went into the printing industry, working for the Jefferson Gazette, the News Herald in Conneaut and the Geauga Times Leader around 1984-85.

“I was in (printing) for 10 years, then went into carpeting and roofing for about 10 years,” Berrier said. “I jumped around a lot.”

For the past 15 years, he has worked as a truck driver with Rich Hart of HLH Trucking out of Pierpont. Most of his driving is within a five-state area, but he has also driven to Texas and Colorado.

Berrier, the son of Beverly and Gerald Berrier, is very close to his family.

“My parents gave me every opportunity,” he said. “They were my strength.”

Berrier likes to hunt and fish. He hunts deer, turkey and coyotes, but the proudest is of the mountain lion he bagged in Montana and has mounted.

“That was the hunt of a lifetime,” he said.

PINNEY: Deming grad finished third in county scoring on 1957-1958 squad

FROM PAGE 8

Pinney worked around his house, having a pond dug for the family to enjoy and building a basketball court for the grandchildren.

He always had a project he was working on.

That could be a “buttons treasure chest” for his grandchildren (now found in a secret hide-out in his great-grandchildren’s forts) or making hurdles for his granddaughters to practice jumping for track.

Pinney also loved to tell scary stories around the campfire, cut trees and clear land to provide firewood for his mother and stepfather in addition to his own home.

“He took pride in his home and vehicles, but most of all in his family,” Nancy said. “He was proud of all his children. After a long day of work, he would sit at the dining table with me, have tea and discuss the day. He was a leader, active, responsible, determined, truthful, humble and helped others.”

Pinney’s children include Jim, 57, who is a foreman for a pipefitter’s union in Scranton, Pa.; Nick, 56, an electrician in Jefferson; Deb, 53, an RN in Jefferson; Jeff, 51, who works at CIO in Dublin, Ohio and Jill, 38, a former English teacher who stays home raising children currently in Brecksville.

“All Jim’s children love the outdoors, sports, animals and working on projects,” Nancy said.

“They invest their time in family, volunteering, coaching and helping others.”
COXON: Conneaut graduate scored 1,000 career points for mid ’90s teams

FROM PAGE 9

Conneaut took on Cleveland Benedictine, which zoomed to a big lead. When the game slowed down, the Spartans came back only to lose by a point.

“Tony and Mike got in foul trouble,” Coxon said. “Unfortunately, we got beat by one.”

Coxon also played baseball his freshman year at Conneaut, but concentrated on basketball after that season.

“It was the sport I loved,” he said.

Though he dreamed of playing Division I college basketball, as a 6-foot-2 shooting guard, Coxon wasn’t in that sort of demand. He reduced his choices to Division III Baldwin-Wallace and John Carroll.

“I developed a great relationship with John Steadman and coach (Mike) Moran at John Carroll,” he said. “I felt that was the place for me to play. It was close to home, so I went to John Carroll and was very happy.

I’m a member of the Basketball Hall of Fame at John Carroll. We got to the Elite Eight (in the national tournament) my junior and senior seasons.

At John Carroll, Coxon played the two-guard and a little small forward, with a bit of point guard thrown in. In his senior season, he averaged 17 points per game and led the team in assists.

“Making the Division III tournament was exciting,” he said. “I’m very fond of coach Moran, coach Steadman and John Carroll University.”

At John Carroll, Coxon took his degree in business finance, graduating in 1999.

He student taught for a year, then went to work in Columbus for Lucent Technologies.

But he had always been interested in law enforcement and applied for the FBI in 2004.

He was selected to go to FBI training at Quantico and has been an FBI agent for 13 years.

“For the last 10 years I’ve been on the FBI Fugitive Task Force, a well-respected team in Las Vegas,” he said. “We deal with the worst of the worst — homicide suspects and robbery suspects.

“I couldn’t have chosen a better field than the FBI. I’m blessed to be part of it. Our fugitive team is a lot like a basketball team. We have 10 guys working together every day. We work well together. It’s a 24-hour-a-day job.”

Coxon is married to Stacey, from Parma. The couple has three children — Kinsley, a 4 1/2 year-old daughter, Kason a 2 1/2-year old son and Karter, an eight-month old son.

Stacey is in food sales, specifically selling fresh European truffles, and deals with high-end chefs on the Las Vegas Strip.

“I’m honored that I was selected (for the ACBF Hall of Fame),” he said. “It means a lot to me. I know there are a lot of tough decisions. When I look back on my career, they were some of the best years I could have had. I wouldn’t change a thing. I think we could have won a state title, but we never quite put it together.

“My family, especially my mom and dad, Connie and Gary — I can’t thank them enough for all of their support. They never missed a game and it meant a lot. Also I’m grateful for my two brothers, Joe and Rob, who also were very supportive and always there for me. I was lucky to have a good network of family and friends. To this day, I’m still close to Mike Pape and Tony Lyons and other Conneaut classmates and former basketball players. I wouldn’t change anything.”
Olmstead says. “I remember thinking that I let my teammates and coaches down.”

Then, Conneaut couldn’t duplicate its 2000 softball success, despite returning several starters, including shutdown pitcher Adrian Tuttle and the keystone double-play combination of Kudlock and Olmstead.

“We couldn’t get the key hits we needed that game,” Olmstead says. Olmstead was recruited by Youngstown State, Bowling Green and Kent State, in addition to a lot of Division II schools.

She played basketball for three years at Youngstown State, finishing out her season year at Mercyhurst University.

Playing shooting guard and small forward for the Penguins, Olmstead found herself on a team that was “below .500 my freshman year. It was a struggle.”

Her parents, always supportive, came down for her games, even though she didn’t play much as a freshman.

Olmstead averaged about 10 points per outing in her sophomore and junior sea-

sons. Then, after transferring to Mercyhurst (she lost credits in the process), Olmstead was injured.

She became a student assistant coach, a position that taught her aspects of the game she had never fully appreciated before.

After graduating in 2005, Olmstead became a substitute teacher in the Conneaut area for a few months.

Meanwhile, she applied for teaching jobs in the Virginia area because of the teaching opportunities. By the following year, she had obtained a job teaching fifth grade at McAuliffe Elementary School in Virginia.

After four years there, she moved to Graham Park Middle School in Triangle, Va. (about 25 miles from Washington, D.C.), where she teaches sixth grade social studies, meaning American history.

She now has 11 years of teaching in.

From 2008-2017, she was a high school assistant girls varsity basketball coach.

This year, Olmstead switched to coaching boys at the middle school level. She also coaches girls track.

About the only basketball she plays these days is in an instructive capacity, where she can still befuddle her players with her pull-up jumper.

Olmstead has become a real enthusiast of cross-fit training, and spends hours in the gym.

“I wouldn’t be where I am today if not for the support of my parents and brother and sister, along with my extended family,” Olmstead said.

“It’s nice to see your parents in the stands every single high-school game. If one of them couldn’t be there, the other one was. I’m very grateful for that. My brother, Kyle kept stats and my sister, Marissa was only 7 at the time, but proudly wore my shooting shirt.”

FROM PAGE 11

OLMSTEAD: Conneaut graduate scored nearly 1,700 points in high school career

Jessica Olmstead
Conneaut graduate and 2018 ACBF HOF inductee

The fourth annual Tom Henson ACBF (Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation) golf tournament is scheduled for Saturday, July 14 at the Geneva on the Lake Golf Course.

Registra-
tion is at 8 a.m. with tee time at 9 a.m. This is a four-person scram-
ble event. The cost is $75 per golfer ($300 per team) and open to the first 120 players.

For more information or questions, contact Steve Kray at 440-998-1413.

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Jessica Olmstead
Conneaut graduate and 2018 ACBF HOF inductee

The fourth annual Tom Henson ACBF (Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation) golf tournament is scheduled for Saturday, July 14 at the Geneva on the Lake Golf Course.

Registra-
tion is at 8 a.m. with tee time at 9 a.m. This is a four-person scram-
ble event. The cost is $75 per golfer ($300 per team) and open to the first 120 players.

For more information or questions, contact Steve Kray at 440-998-1413.
HAMPER: Jefferson graduate finished with more than 1,000 points, 1,400 rebounds in high school basketball career

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honored to be playing with them. Kelly and I also experienced our first loss together in the ninth grade, after going undefeated in junior high.

“Going undefeated in the seventh and eighth grades was memorable, and I know we had some district/regional championships, But I don't remember the specific years/titles. All in all, it was an amazing experience, and awesome part of my high school memories, because of Coach Holmes and my teammates.”

The late Holmes, who won more games than any other county basketball coach, male or female in history, had a great effect on Starr.

“Coach Holmes was an amazing coach and person,” she said. “He was knowledgeable, calm but firm, caring, fun, and funny (well, at least he thought so). What an honor and blessing it was to play for him.”

Starr has a clear memory of her first varsity contest, because she fouled out.

“I was nervous about the fact that I had fouled out, but coach Holmes assured me he was proud of me because I displayed aggressiveness, something we had worked on since the summer at basketball camp,” she said.

Over her high-school career Starr scored 1,047 points and totaled 1,410 rebounds, good for third in state history. The 375 rebounds she pulled in in 1998-99 rank 14th in state history.

She also played volleyball at Jefferson her sophomore and junior years.

“I was not a natural, but coach (Jeannine) Bartlett was patient with me and helped me along, as well as some of my teammates,” she said. “My very first volleyball open gym was such a disaster, LOL. I was trying to learn how to approach the net for a hit, and I totally jumped right INTO the net, bounced off, and fell on my back.

“We all had a good laugh, and coach Bartlett joked about putting our health-class lesson on learning how to check on injured people into action. I enjoyed the two seasons on the team, but ultimately decided not to play my senior year. As far as successes, I honestly don’t remember if I made any special teams or not.”

Starr could have played basketball in college, but elected not to.

“I knew my junior year that I did not want to play basketball in college, much to my Dad’s disappointment — we still joke about it to this day,” she said. “He would always say, ‘We’ll see, you might change your mind.’ I did not pursue any contacts made by coaches/colleges.”

Instead, Starr began college her freshman year at Thiel College before transferring to Edinboro as a sophomore. After her graduation there, she obtained her master’s at Gannon University. Starr played no sports in college. She has her bachelors from Edinboro in elementary education and a masters in curriculum and instruction from Gannon.

After student-teaching at Elk Valley Elementary in Girard, Pa., she was hired by that district the summer she graduated. She teaches math and science at Elk Valley.

“I absolutely love my job, co-workers, administration, and students,” she said. I am very blessed. I am currently teaching my 14th year.”

Starr is married to her high school sweetheart, Sam Starr. The couple will celebrate their 12th anniversary in October.

They have two children — Gabriel (10 years old) and Madelyn (7).

Though Bekki doesn’t have a lot of extra time, she has played in some various social leagues for fun (sand volleyball, church volleyball, women’s social basketball).

“I am currently enjoying watching our children begin to try their hands at various activities, including basketball,” she said. “I am also enjoying serving at our church and participating in Bible studies.”

Bekki Hamper had more than 1,000 points, 1,400 rebounds in her Jefferson High School career.
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his undefeated year with fondness.
“That was a great group of kids to work with,” he said. “Their families provided excellent support to the guys on the team.”

In Brown's case, brothers Greg, Jeff and Andy helped provide Rod a base.
“It's a pleasure to coach a guy like that,” Hitchcock said.
“Because of the expectations of the parents and players, it makes the job easier.”

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was also voted first team all-sectional (Class AAA), first team All-District (Class AAA), and honorable mention All-State (Class AAA).

He led the team in rebounding and scoring, at about 17 per contest, to be named team MVP.

Between his junior and senior years at Geneva, Games was playing basketball on the outdoor courts at Geneva High School when head coach Bob Herpy spotted him and talked him into playing football. He was signed up as a tight end.

“That was one of the best decisions I made in high school,” Games said. “We went 10-0 and were the first undefeated team in Geneva High School history. It was a great experience.”

After high school, Games went on to play basketball for a year at Ohio Northern.

“But I was a tweener,” he said. “I was too slow and didn’t handle the ball well enough to play guard and too small to pound underneath. I decided to focus on working to get money for school and keeping my grades up.”

Games had gone to Ohio Northern to become a school teacher. He graduated in 1980 and took a teaching position in Madison.

“I taught industrial arts and coached with Jim Dolan for four years,” he said. “We won the NEC in 1984 and the team was recently recognized for holding the best record for boys’ basketball in the school's history at 20-4. Coach Dolan gave me responsibility for the defense and I used a lot of what I learned while playing for coach Koval at Geneva.”

“I asked her out when going through her checkout line to purchase spaghetti at the IGA store in Madison. I couldn't resist her beautiful smile” he said. “Of course, our first date was scouting the next team we were going to play in sectionals.”

The couple has two daughters, Laurie and Beth, and a son, Mike, along with seven grandchildren and one on the way.

Games always liked sports, but didn’t have the opportunity to participate until his freshman year.

“We lived in the country south of Austinburg and my parents (William and Barbara) were not sports people,” he said. “My father worked second shift and my mother didn’t drive so I couldn’t get to practices.”

Games eventually landed in the power industry where he’s been for the past 27 years.

He went back to school to earn an MBA in 2002 and is now a vice president responsible for electric generation and marketing at Vectren Energy, a public utility company that supplies electricity in southwest Indiana and natural gas to most of Indiana and parts of Ohio.

He lives in Evansville Indi. Games married the former Judy Mallo- ry in 1981.

“I'm getting too old, keep getting hurt and it’s hard to keep up with the young guys.” Games said.
2018 ACBF HALL OF FAME CAPSULES

· Rick Berrier: Rick, a 1981 Jefferson graduate, was the leading scorer and rebounder on coach Rick Nemet's 1979-1981 Falcon teams. He was a master of the dunk and was named all-county and all-league his junior and senior years. Rick now works for HLH Trucking out of Pierpont.

· Rod Brown: Rod, a 1980 Pymatuning Valley graduate, played point guard for coach Bob Hitchcock's teams, including the 1979-80 team that went undefeated in the regular season and reached the district finals before falling to Hawken. Rod was a Star Beacon All-Ashtabula and all-league choice. He now owns and operates a dairy farm in southern Ashtabula County.

· Jessica Cancel: Jessica, a 1999 Ashtabula graduate, scored more than 1,000 points for Roby Potts' Panther teams. She was selected to the first-team All-Ashtabula County and All-NEC squads as a junior and senior. Jessica now works as an export customer service specialist.

· Dan Coxon: Dan, a 1995 Conneaut graduate, was one of three 1,000-point scorers for Conneaut in the mid-1990s, joining Mike Pape and Tony Lyons. The Spartans lost just one regular-season game in Coxon's junior and senior seasons for coach Kent Houston. Dan went on to star at John Carroll and is now in that college's Basketball Hall of Fame. Dan now works as an FBI agent in Las Vegas.

· Wayne Games: Wayne, a 1976 Geneva graduate, played power forward for coach Bill Koval on an NEC championship team when Games was a junior. He was a first-team all-county and all-NEC selection as a junior and senior. Wayne now works as a vice-president of Vectren Energy in Indiana.

· Bekki (Hamper) Starr: Bekki, a 2000 Jefferson graduate, joined Kelly Kapferer as one of coach Rod Holmes 'Twin Towers' on the Falcons team that made the regionals when Hamper and Kapferer were seniors. Bekki totaled 1,047 points and 1,410 rebounds in her high school career, being named all-county and all-NEC in her junior and senior years. Bekki now teaches school in Elk Valley in Pennsylvania.

· Steve Kray: Steve, a 1997 Edgewood Jefferson graduate, earned all-county and all-NEC honors for Al Runyan's strong teams of those years, averaging over 17 points per game as a junior and leading the area at 23.3 points as a senior. Kray went to Mount Union, but broke his wrist as a sophomore and concentrated on his studies. He returned to the Buckeye system after graduation and is now an assistant principal at the middle school and athletic director for the system.

· Jessica Olmstead: When Jessica graduated from Conneaut in 2001, she was the second-leading scorer in county history. She still ranks third in that category among girls players. Playing for coach Tom Ritali, Jessica and her teammates won an NEC championship as juniors and seniors. She went on to play for Youngstown State and Mercyhurst. She is now a social studies teacher in Virginia, not far from Washington D.C.

· Jim Pinney: Jim, who died in 2016, was the best player for Ron Mahon's Deming Rangers in 1957 and 1958, averaging 18.7 points as a senior to finish third in the county League in scoring. He went on to play for Kent State-Ashtabula Branch's first team. For many years Jim worked for Culligan.

· Al Sidbeck: Al, a 1966 Harbor graduate, played guard and forward for Ed Armstrong. He won all-county and all-league honors for the Mariners. Al played basketball for Kent State-Ashtabula after graduation from Harbor. He tried out for Kent State’s main campus team but didn't make the team. He worked for Ashtabula Bow and Socket before moving on to Plasticsolors. He retired at the age of 66.

In this file photo, Steve Kray is shown coaching the Edgewood girls basketball team.
Congratulations Hall of Fame Inductees!

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