

# Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation

## Awards Banquet and Hall of Fame Induction Sunday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024

### OFFICIAL PROGRAM STAR BEACON



Pictured are from left, Olajuwan Smith (brother), Senoj Jones (daughter), Darrah Smith Jones, Dallas Jones Sr. (husband), Laylah Jones (daughter), Dallas Jones Jr. (son), Stephanie Smith (mother) and London Jones (son). Darrah Smith Jones, a Lakeside graduate, will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame during its ceremony on Sunday at the New Leaf Event Center in Conneaut.

### Smith Jones becomes first Lakeside graduate to become a member of ACBF

**BY CHRIS LARICK**  
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Most basketball players dream of connecting on one buzzer-beater that wins a game at some point in their lives. Few of them get to experience that thrill. Lakeside's Darrah Smith (now Darrah Jones) is one of the few that did in a game the Dragons played against Warren G. Harding. "I remember being down the whole game," Jones said. "We were scrapping to get the score closer because we

believed we were the better team. "With around two minutes left in the game, we were intentionally fouling to get the ball back. Their team was missing a lot of free throws, so we kept at it. We finally got the game within reach and sent a girl to the line, where she was able to make one. We were then were down by two, I believe. "With only seconds on the clock that felt like forever, we inbounded the ball. I recall taking maybe two steps. I was right in front of the half-

**'Basketball just always stood out to me. I can recall watching kids playing and thinking to myself. 'I can do that.'**

**Darrah Smith Jones**  
Lakeside graduate on being inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame on Sunday

court line on the opposing team's side. "I launched the ball into the air toward our basket. It seemed as if it took forever to land. The whole gym was silent, and as time expired, the ball went into the basket. It was pure pande-

monium. Everyone that had left the gym came back in and my team and I were ecstatic." That may have been Jones' most memorable made shot, but there were plenty of others

SEE **FIRST**, B7

### Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Inductees Class of 2024

Darrah Smith Jones	B1
Tom Church	B3
Tim Tallbacka	B4
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Antonio (Ralph) DeJesus	B5
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Mike Brosovich	B8
Conneaut 1969-70 team	B9
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# CONGRATULATE A HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES AND AWARD WINNERS

FROM TRUSTEES  
MIKE JOSLIN  
AND  
NICK IAROCCHI



# Conneaut’s Church parlayed playing basketball career into coaching career

BY CHRIS LARICK  
sports@starbeacon.com

Looking back from the vantage point of a quarter of a century, Tom Church considers his Conneaut 1997-1998 basketball year “the magical season.”

It was the kind of year everyone wishes he or she could remember, though, not all of us can.

The Spartans had gone 5-16 the previous year and expectations were low for them from people who are supposed to know about that sort of thing.

“The league [North-eastern Conference] was really good that year,” Church said. “Riverside, Edgewood and Ashtabula Harbor were tough. Then, tragically [Harbor’s] Ryan Turner got killed [in an automobile accident] and we went to the funeral. He was not only a friend but one of the best players in the conference. That was a hard thing for us at that age.

“We were a very, very close team that had been 5-16 my junior year and that adversity helped us.”

Behind coach Kent Houston, the Spartans responded, winning 18 straight games after losing their second game of the season at Harbor to finish 19-1.

Even a loss to a Cliff-Hunt coached Perry team in the sectionals couldn’t diminish the great season.

Encouraged by Houston since he came under the coach’s tutelage, Church had a great high school career, though the team results didn’t always reflect it.

The beneficiary of a noted athletic family, including grandfather Harry; father, Tom; mother, Jan and aunt Tammy.

Church launched a stellar basketball (and, to a lesser degree, baseball and wrestling) career at Conneaut. He later parlayed his basketball skills into an effective college career at Ashland University and more recently, into a college coaching career.

The Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation will honor Church, along with nine other men and women and one boys’ team, on Sunday during its induction ceremony at the New Leaf Event Center in Conneaut.

By the time Church reached Conneaut High School, the 1998 graduate played a little JV as a freshman on the great Spartan team featuring ACBF Hall of Famers Dan Coxon, Mike Pape and Tony Lyons. The team went a perfect 20-0 during the regular season.

“Seeing that helped my development as a player,” Church said. “My sophomore year I played varsity, starting about half the games. That was a transitional year. I played AAU ball that summer.”

Houston was a huge influence in his career, Church said.

“He was very influential in my life,” Church said. “I’m not sure what my journey would have been like if not for him. He was an exceptional basketball coach.

“Entering my sopho-

more year, he said he was counting on me. I remember him taking me off to the side, telling me how good I could be and where I could get to. He got me involved with AAU. We still keep in touch to this day.”

Church had a decent year as a sophomore.

“I probably averaged eight or nine points as a sophomore, which was pretty respectable at that time,” he said. “Nick Armeni and Steve Anderson were our seniors.

“I think we were around .500 and top four in the league. Riverside was really good that year. My junior year we had one senior, Jimmy Kennedy and a bunch of juniors. We didn’t get off to a good start and went 0-10 or 011. We had a lot of young guys who didn’t have much experience — my best friend and point guard Denver Schaffer, Pat Carr and Eric Bunnell.”

The Spartans won five of their last 10 games to finish at 5-16 that year.

“But we built a lot of confidence entering our senior year,” Church said. “And we had a very good summer, I didn’t play baseball, played AAU basketball.”

As mentioned, the Spartans finished the regular season at 19-1. But they had two weeks off between their last game against Madison, which clinched the NEC championship, after getting a bye in the first week of sectionals.

“We didn’t play very well,” Church said of the sectional final game won by Perry.

Church averaged about 21 or 22 points per game as a junior and 25 or 26 as a senior while playing forward and wing at 6-foot-4 or 6-foot-5.

“I think I was honorable mention all-state as a junior and first-team all-state and Lake Erie District Player of the Year as a senior,” he said.

He was recruited by a lot of Division III colleges, along with Ashland University, the only Division II university in Ohio at the time. His choice came down to Ashland or Baldwin Wallace.

“I was not as sold on Ashland at the beginning since I would be like a preferred walk-on [instead of a scholarship player] at the beginning,” Church said. “They had the pick of the litter at the time. I knew at the beginning that I was not going to play in the first year.

“But when I got down there, I fell in love with the campus. I wanted to teach high school and coach at that time. Roger Lyons, was the coach and he reminded me a lot of Kent Houston. I wanted to find a place I could call home for four years. I remember going down with Mom and as soon as I’d been there a while, I knew that was where I would go. I called coach Houston and said, ‘This is it.’ I was in love with the campus and the degree it offered.”

When he got to Ashland, Church realized that he was in a battle for a place on the team. He needed more physicality.



The Church family consists of, front left, Harrison, Vincent and Evelynnn; back left, Tom and Jennifer. Tom Church will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame during its ceremony on Sunday at the New Leaf Event Center in Conneaut.

“I was 6-5 and about 165 pounds when I got there,” he said. “The guys I was competing against were from junior colleges and Division I schools. I wondered about the mental toughness and confidence I was going to have to have. It was an eye-opener.”

Church was red-shirted his first year which meant he could practice but not play in games his first year.

The next year as a redshirt freshman, “We were very, very good,” he said.

“I was probably the 11th or 12th man and played seven or eight minutes a game,” Church said. “I started questioning myself, but I kept on working. I went to Ashland for more than just basketball, but believed I had the talent to compete at that level.”

In the following season, his third season with the team, but his sophomore year as a player (2000-2001), Church didn’t play a lot in the first seven or eight games and the team was struggling, going about 2-5 to start the season.

“We made a road trip to Michigan and lost to Northwood to go to 3-5,” he said. “I started at Ferris State the next game and gave the team a spark. I had 12 or 15 points in the first half and played well. From then on, I started and we were about .500 the rest of the year.”

At his height, Church was a bit small to be a college forward and played shooting guard or wing at Ashland.

“I shot a lot of threes,” he said. “I was our perimeter threat.”

Colleges are always trying to upgrade their rosters however, and Ashland brought in a transfer from Division I Bowling Green Church’s junior year.

“I came off the bench as our sixth man,” he said. “We went 17-13. The second half of the year I got to start. I averaged about 10 points a game my redshirt junior year.”

By the end of that year, Church had his degree, but came back for a fifth scholastic year to play basketball and earn

**‘From the minute I got here, I absolutely loved it, loved the recruiting and coaching.’**

**Tom Church**  
Conneaut graduate and 2024 Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame inductee on the start of his coaching career

his masters of education degree.

The Eagles started strong at 11-0, but struggled a bit in the second half of the season and wound up 18-12.

“I averaged 10 or 11 points a game and led the team in three-pointers,” Church said. “I was all-academic all-conference.

“I had a good career. I wasn’t a Hall of Famer, but I absolutely loved it there.”

All the time he was at Ashland, Church was preparing himself to teach and coach in high school.

College coaching never entered his mind. And when he had finished his five years at Ashland with two degrees, opportunity beckoned.

Conneaut, his alma mater, needed a social studies and assistant basketball coach. Church signed on and became Houston’s JV coach.

After his first year there, Houston moved into administration at Conneaut and Church took over the head basketball coaching job.

After two years in that capacity, in 2006, Steve Fleming, whom Church knew from Ashland, became head coach at Hiram and offered Church a job on his staff.

Church got a job teaching in a vocational school near Hiram and assisted Fleming.

“From the minute I got there, I absolutely loved it, loved the recruiting and coaching, loved being on Steve’s staff,” he said. “We had a solid year, but I felt I had found my calling.”

After a year, Church got an offer to become the top assistant at St. Joseph College in Indiana.

“I would be completely out of teaching, so it was a little scary,” he

said. “You have a window for college coaching, but I asked myself ‘Are you sure?’”

The offer was attractive, but no slam dunk. Public school teaching-coaching had advantages that college coaching didn’t match — a good retirement plan, good mostly-paid insurance, job security, etc.

But Church was single, mitigating some of those disadvantages.

He took the leap and it paid dividends.

“I had a lot of success as an assistant at St. Joe’s,” Church said. “We made the NCAA Division II tournament two of the three years. I was able to recruit and had the life of a college coach.

“My final year at St. Joseph we had an amazing run and made the elite eight. After that year, I married my wife, [Jennifer] whom I met at Hiram.”

His next stop was as an assistant at Florida Southern in Lakeland, Florida.

Jennifer was able to get a job down there. Florida Southern made the NCAA tournament three straight years, including a trip to the Division II Elite Eight.

After Church’s third year there, St. Joseph asked him back as its head coach, a job he took in April 2013.

“I was there four years and rebuilt the program,” he said. “We made the conference tournament the fourth year.”

But during that fourth year St. Joseph had announced it was broke and was closing its doors in the spring.

“I started applying to every job that came out,” Church said. “Indiana University-Kokomo was looking for a coach. Kokomo was a city of 100,000 in Indiana. We had unbelievable success there, won 17 games and went to the tournament when they only won seven the year before. I had a lot of success in Kokomo.”

But after a year, he was offered a bigger job in Tiffin, coaching the Tiffin University Dragons for the 2018-2019 season.

“They had just let their head coach go and were looking for a head coach

from Ohio and who had some head-coaching experience,” he said.

“My connection to Tiffin was that Steve Fleming and the AD at Tiffin had known each other. That got my foot in the door.”

Tiffin had not had much success for the past 20-25 years.

“But I thought it was a good job that I really wanted,” Church said.

It took a while, but there were positive signs along the way. After a 5-14 2020 season shortened by the coronavirus pandemic season, the Dragons went 10-18 in 2021-2022.

Then, in 2022-2023, they topped .500 at 15-14 and made the playoffs for the first time in 21 years.

Tiffin went 12-8 in the GMAC (Great Midwest Athletic Conference), the fourth seed in the tournament. Church was named the 2022-2023 Coach of the Year.

This past season, Tiffin finished 18-12 overall. They defeated Ashland 70-49 at home and 71-61 away.

“I have a great staff and great young men as players,” Church said. “I’m proud of where we are now.

“My family and I love it here. I’m close to my family and Tiffin is a growing city, a town of 25,000. It’s a little bit of a college town with Tiffin University and Heidelberg. I feel very, very blessed landing here. Jennifer is teaching at the middle school.”

Jennifer was a volleyball star herself, at Boardman High School and Hiram.

She is in both schools’ Hall of Fame.

The Churches have three children — Harrison, 8; Evelynnn, 6; and Vincent, 3.

Church will never forget where he came from.

“I have a lot of great memories from back home,” he said. “Coach Houston was a major influence on myself and my teammates and he maintained a level of excellence for our boys basketball program for years.

“Looking back, I remember how the community had followed us and supported us, all the things that happened that magical year [of 1997-98] “



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# Harbor graduate Tallbacka has had plenty of memories playing, coaching basketball

BY CHRIS LARICK  
sports@starbeacon.com

In the middle of February, 1991, Tim Tallbacka enjoyed a night he will never forget.

"I think my best playing memory was Senior Night at Hiram College," Tallbacka recalls. "We defeated John Carroll by four points. I also scored my 1,000th point."

"There was a bus that traveled from Ashtabula to Hiram to watch that night, a really special memory."

"A fellow Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame member, Matt Zappitelli from Conneaut, was on the floor [playing for John Carroll] when I scored that point."

That may have been his best memory, but Tallbacka had plenty of them to choose from as a basketball player at Harbor High School and Hiram College and, later, as a coach at Ashtabula, Lakeside, Brookfield and Conneaut.

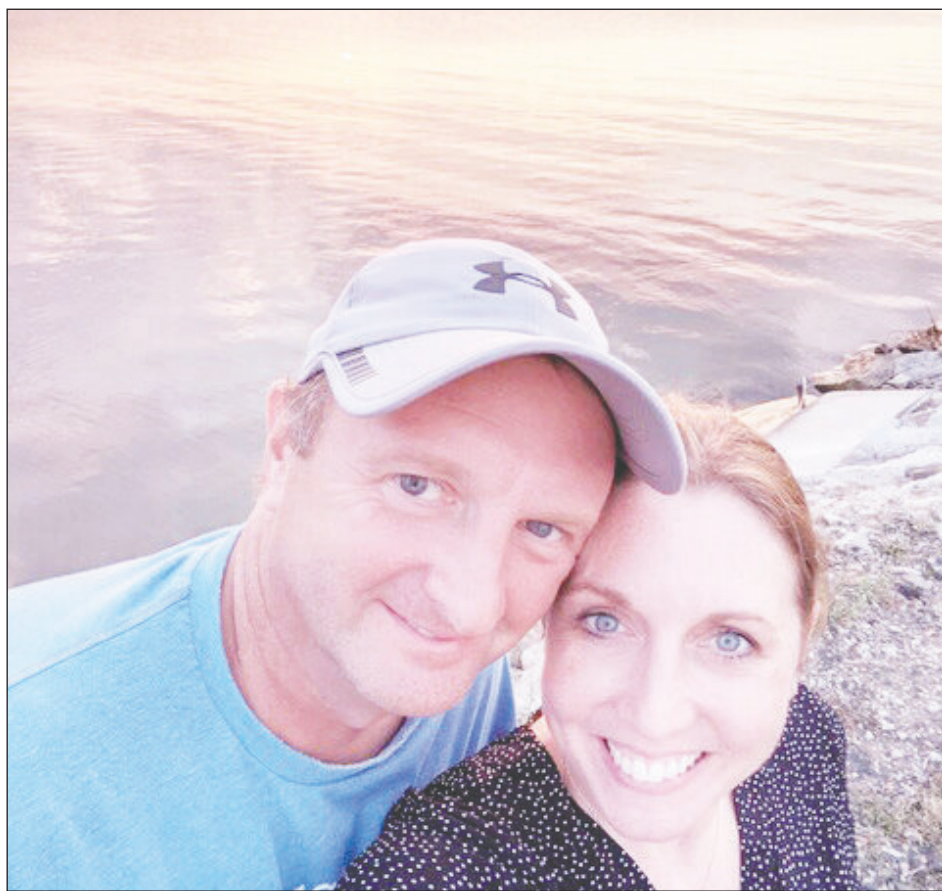


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Harbor graduate Tim Tallbacka, left, is pictured with his wife, Emily. Tallbacka will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame during its banquet on Sunday at the New Leaf Event Center in Conneaut.

introduced him to basketball when he was around 5 years old.

"We had a 5-foot hoop in our basement and he would play on his knees," Tallbacka said. "There was a program called the YBA at the YMCA [that I played in]. My father helped coach the team. We also had a sixth-grade basketball program at Thomas Jefferson Elementary School, which was rare at the time."

By the time he entered high school, Tallbacka had reached a height of 6-foot-3 and played forward for Coach Andrew Isco, another ACBF Hall of Famer.

"He was a fantastic coach," Tallbacka said. "I learned a ton of basketball fundamentals from him and I also coached with him at various stops in my coaching career."

Tallbacka's teammates on the Mariners (he graduated in 1987) included the starting five of Joe Rich, Fred Scruggs, Al Riesterer, Tim Hedberg and himself.

That group had a huge year in 1986-87, going 20-4, winning the Northeastern Conference championship and advancing to the district finals before being beaten by Chagrin Falls.

In his high school career, Tallbacka averaged seven points per game as a junior and 16 points and seven rebounds per game his senior season.

He moved up from special mention in the All-NEC and All-Ashtabula County all-star teams to first team on those squads as a senior.

"I scored 28 points in a win over Edgewood in January 1987," Tallbacka said. "That was significant because I had never played well against them in previous years."

"Also we clinched the NEC title at Geneva ... that was a very memorable game. Our district semifinal win over Aurora in front of a huge crowd at Lakeland Community College was great, too."

Like so many athletes in those days, Tallbacka didn't limit himself to one sport.

"I played baseball and golf in high school as well," he said. "I have always been glad I played three sports. As a coach, I've always encouraged athletes to play multiple

sports.

"When I was a senior in high school, I had already committed to playing basketball at Hiram College at the end of the basketball season. I still played baseball, and although I was not a great baseball player, I am glad to this day to have played."

Tallbacka had to choose among Case Western Reserve, Ohio Northern and Hiram for his college career. He picked Hiram with legendary coach Bill Hollinger, who coached 30 years at Hiram.

Hollinger retired after Tallbacka's freshman year and was replaced by Brad Ellis, a former Geneva basketball star, for Tallbacka's sophomore through senior seasons.

"He did a great job at Hiram," Tallbacka said of Ellis. "We were a way better team and program by the time I was a senior. He recruited and coached some of the best talent in the Cleveland/Akron area. I still maintain contact with both coach Ellis and coach Isco."

At Hiram, Tallbacka's teammates included Steve Fleming from Newbury (who would return to coach the Terriers and bring Tom Church as an assistant), John Lampe, Doug Hughes, Danny Young, Mike Palmer, Dan Brook, Steve Hardaway and others, depending on the year.

Playing forward and wing, Tallbacka scored 1,020 points at Hiram and, in 2018 was selected to the school's Hall of Fame.

"I also was the leading scorer my freshman and sophomore years, averaging around 14 points and five rebounds per game," he said. "I also played in 100 games, only missing one game due to a sprained ankle."

The Terriers were 4-20 his first year, then won between eight and 10 games the other seasons, Tallbacka recalls.

"We played in the President's Athletic Conference my freshman and sophomore years, then moved to the highly competitive Ohio Athletic Conference my junior and senior year," he said. "While at Hiram College, I hit a buzzer-beating three-pointer to beat Bethany, West Virginia, my freshman year."

"We defeated Otterbein College [ranked third

in the country at the time] my junior year. I scored 19 points that night. My career high was 32 points twice [both my sophomore year] against Thiel College and against Davis and Elkins University."

At Hiram, he was named honorable Mention All-PAC his freshman year and finished third in the voting for freshman of the year.

He moved up to second-team all-PAC as a sophomore. After the Terriers moved to the tougher OAC, he was honorable mention his junior year. Tallbacka also made the OAC All-Academic team both his junior and senior seasons.

He shot 44 percent from the field and 73 percent from the foul line.

Tallbacka graduated with a bachelors of art degree in history and a teaching certificate in history grades 7-12.

He landed a job teaching and coaching at Harbor High School after college, then went on to Ashtabula, Lakeside, Brookfield and Conneaut high schools.

Currently in his 33rd year as a classroom social studies teacher, he has been a head basketball coach for more than 20 years at those four schools.

This year, Tallback coached the Braden Junior High School seventh-grade team and helps with the Edgewood High School squad whenever he can.

He has won the Ashtabula County Coach of the Year twice and the Northeastern Conference Coach of the Year twice (in 2000 and 2003).

Interestingly, Tallbacka succeeded Tom Church, another 2024 ACBF Hall of Fame inductee, as head coach at Conneaut when he took over that job.

In addition, Church

**'The game of basketball has truly been a blessing for me.'**

**Tim Tallbacka**  
Harbor graduate and 2024 Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame inductee

left to assist Steve Fleming at Hiram College, Tallbacka's alma mater.

Tallbacka married Emily Tallbacka in July, 2018.

"Our family consists of my children, Hannah Tallbacka, 19, and Trenton Tallbacka, 14, as well as her children, Anna Wacker, 14, Holden Wacker, 20, and Marcus Wacker 24," Tallbacka said. "Trenton plays basketball for the Braden's eighth-grade team and has done very well so far."

"My mother is Tina Tallbacka, who taught at Saybrook Elementary for over 20 years. My sister, Tonya Thomas, is an ACBF Hall of Fame class of 2006 member who starred at Harbor High School and played at Morehead State University. My late father, Dave Tallbacka and late grandfather, Walter Tallbacka were both MVP players at Harbor High School."

At the age of 54, Tallbacka continues to play basketball at the YMCA, "and sometimes with the teams I coach, although I have not played with the Braden or Edgewood teams yet," he said.

"I also am an avid runner," he said, "I work out and play golf."

"I want to thank my family for supporting me during my playing days and through the ups and downs of a long career as a basketball coach, my wife [Emily] and kids, Mom [Tina], my late father [Dave], my sister [Tonya Thomas] and her family, my grandparents, many aunts and uncles have all followed me for over 40 years."

Tallbacka is also grateful for the support from the area and beyond.

"I also can't begin to name all the friends I have met through basketball from high school, college, playing in men's leagues in Mentor, Conneaut, Ashtabula, and at the YMCA, the Westside Shootout [I have six rings] and Washington Elementary, in addition to the many friends in coaching I have made all over Northeastern Ohio and Northwestern Pennsylvania," he said. "The game of basketball has truly been a blessing for me."

# Conneaut's Raevouri takes place in ACBF Hall of Fame

BY ANDREW RAEVOURI

It came as a shock when I received a call from Tim Richards telling me that I was being inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Hall of Fame. I was totally surprised. I thought I had already traveled so far down the memory hole that nobody could find me here living in Pahoa, HI.

But fortunately for me I was mistaken. I want to thank my teammate Ron Richards, who was inducted into the Hall in the Class of 2008, for bringing up my name to the board and not allowing me to disappear. He, Joe Sanford, Bob Brewster, Dick Vaill and myself rounded out the "Iron Five" in the '66-'67 season. We were 16-4 that year and won the NEC championship,

as we Spartans did the previous '65-'66 season with Greg McGill, Rod Steiger, Dennis Miller, Ron and me. Back to back Champs.

I played for coach Andy Garcia (a member of the first Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame in 2003), who stressed defense and a deliberate offense. We didn't score a lot of points but had a few outbursts when Ron Richards shot the lights out. We had five games where we scored 70 or more and one game against Mentor where we scored 86.

It's an amazing honor to join the ranks of the great players in the Hall of Fame. I'm humbled to be a part of basketball culture in Ashtabula County.

I made first-team all-league (Northeastern

Conference) and honorable mention all-state my senior year.

The curious question is why did it take so long to be recognized, when my fellow All-League and All-County competitors, like Steve McHugh, Larry Cumpston, Denny Berrier, and Ron Richards were inducted years ago? I remember competing against these guys since eighth grade.

Short answer: I shot myself in the foot.

Unfortunately my college career fizzled. I stopped having fun playing basketball at the College of Wooster. I didn't like the coach. My best friends on the team quit, and I was impressionable enough to join them. I contented myself the last two years at Wooster playing poker and studying history,



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Andrew Raevouri will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame during its ceremony on Sunday at the New Leaf Event Center in Conneaut.

which is pretty much what I'm still doing today. Later it became clear that quitting the

team was like going all-in and losing a poker tournament, but the stakes were much higher than that. I've tried to correct the assorted human frailties that led to this blunder with mixed success.

I still loved the game of basketball, though, and continued to play in the U.S. Army when I enlisted in 1974. In my three years of service, I made the all-post teams at Ft. Benjamin Harrison,

IN, Yongsan in Seoul Korea, and Ft. Riley, KS. I became Sports Director at AFKN (American Forces Korea Network) radio and TV. My work as a broadcaster was a great job! I remember interviewing Johnny Miller after he won PGA Golfer of the Year honors in 1974 way before he began his fabled broadcasting career. That was a special moment.

SEE RAEVOURI, B11



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# Edgewood graduate Dreslinski Winchester to join sister in ACBF Hall of Fame

**BY CHRIS LARICK**  
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It is no coincidence that sisters Pam and Trisha Dreslinski are often thought of together when Edgewood Warriors fans who know both of them reminisce about girls basketball. Ask either Pam, who was inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame in 2019, or Trisha, who will join her in that group on Sunday, for a memory of their playing days, and they'll inevitably refer to at least one incident from the year they played together.

It was in Pam's senior year at Edgewood in the 2003-2004 season. When she was inducted in 2019, Pam (Dreslinski) Stein recalled a home game against Jefferson.

"[Jefferson] notoriously had a great group of athletes and beat us every year," Pam said. "Except for the time they didn't. From what I remember, and from what my mom likes to tell strangers, Trisha, my sister who was a freshman and playing varsity with me, launched the ball from out-of-bounds down the court to me in full stride. I stepped back to the 3-point line in the corner and drained the game winner."

Trisha (Dreslinski) Winchester remembered a different game in her interview recently.

"I remember my very first varsity game my freshman year," she said. "My sister and I were in zone defense and the first five times the other team brought the ball down we'd double-team them and steal the ball. Pam would just chuck it down the court for me to chase down and get the layup. That probably was my first asthmatic attack because I had to ask her to slow down so I could breathe."

Winchester thinks she was probably introduced to the game of basketball because of her sister.

"I can't even remember when I first picked up a basketball, but it was likely at one of my sister's basketball practices maybe when I was five years old," Trisha said.

From there, Trisha thinks she moved on to play at the YMCA at a young age and, starting in the fourth grade, being coached by her mother, Linda.

"That was really my first experience playing with structured routes, inbound plays, etc.," she said.

When Trisha moved up to her freshman year, she played on the varsity team, playing point guard at about 5-foot-4.

"But if you look at any of the basketball team pamphlets, I was probably 5-6 for that extra two inches of intimidation factor, ha!" she said.

In that freshman year, Trisha played with her sister and several of the teammates from her elementary years.

The group included Jackie Baird, forward; Jessica Higley, guard; Katie McMellan, Alisha Dickey, guard; Alexi Cash, forward; Megan Higley, forward/guard, and Whitney Williams, guard, to name a few more.

"I am sure I am missing some of the other amazing people that I got to play with," Winchester said

During Winchester's years, the Warriors were coached by Christina Fischer and Chris Juncker.

"Coach Fischer had passion for the game and set expectations high, even when I was just a young gun attending the basketball camps at Edgewood," Winchester said. "Coach Juncker is such an encouraging person and a gentle soul —it was not in his nature to get mad. I remember Donny Palm from playing with us in all the summer open gyms at Jefferson.

"I also remember a game we played in Geneva that went into double overtime. I don't remember if we won or lost, but I just remember it was such a tough neck-and-neck game. Another memory was when we played Jefferson at home."

The Warriors were a good team at the time, but sometimes overshadowed by Jefferson

and Geneva.

"I have no idea of our record, but I remember we were somewhere near the top of the pack and I remember the competition," Winchester said. "Jefferson was always so talented [Hayley and Jamie Kapferer, Kelsey Hellmer, Alesa Knight, Sara Febel, and more]; Geneva [Brittany Zele] had grit and hustle and Lakeside [Darrah Smith] was always a physical, high-paced game."

Named special mention Star Beacon All-Ashtabula County as a freshman, Winchester moved up to first-team All-NEC and second-team all-county as a sophomore.

As a junior, Winchester averaged 15.1 points, 5.1 rebounds, 3.6 assists and 3.4 assists per game while connecting on 72 percent of her free throws.

Those efforts earned her recognition as first-team all-conference and all-county, second-team All Northeast-Lakes district and special mention All-Ohio.

Her senior year she averaged almost 11 points, four rebounds and 3 and a half assists and steals per game. She was the Warriors' MVP her junior and senior seasons.

For her career, Winchester estimates that she scored 700 points.

"While I was a decent scorer for my team, I like to think of myself as a hustler and play-



PHOTO SUBMITTED

**Trisha Dreslinski Winchester, back left, with husband, Marc and children, Jack, 4 and Carter, 2. Winchester will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame during its ceremony on Sunday night at the New Leaf Event Center in Conneaut.**

maker on the court," she said.

An overall athlete, Winchester also starred on the volleyball and softball teams at Edgewood. In fact, softball was her best sport.

Her parents, Dave and Linda Dreslinski, followed Pam's and Trisha's careers.

"My parents collected almost every single newspaper article," Winchester said. "Between my teammates and them I have so many really cool scrapbooks. I lettered all four years of high school for each sport and in my junior and senior years earned the team MVP award a couple times."

After graduation, Winchester was recruited by Wright State and Hofstra, where her sister, Pam, was finishing her softball career.

Not surprisingly, she chose Hofstra, on Long Island, New York.

"Division I sports is a different ballgame, but altogether my motto then and now is 'This is hard, but you can do hard things' and know fully that I can achieve what I put my mind to," Winchester said.

She had a stellar career at Hofstra, starting at shortstop for the Pride, a team which regularly qualifies for the Division I NCAA tournament.

Winchester graduated from Hofstra in 2011 with a bachelor of science in biology with a minor in chemistry.

"I immediately entered into the cellular and molecular biology doctorate program at Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo, N.Y. doing research," Winchester said. "After a couple years there, I decided I did not want to be a bench scientist [a scientist who works primarily in the laboratory] so I started taking business courses as well."

She completed her PhD and MBA with a focus in ethical leadership at the end of 2016, and quickly got her first job as an educational affairs coordinator at a small start-up laboratory called Cleveland HeartLab.

"[That company] uniquely focused on blood biomarkers that can better identify risk for a heart attack or stroke," Winchester said. "After a year, the lab was acquired by the lab giant Quest Diagnostics, which developed our small lab into the Cardiometabolic Center of Excellence. With it grew my career. I advanced to become a manager of Clinical Education in 2019 and then senior manager in 2022."

Though her life was centered in New York for several years, in a sense her thoughts have never been far from northeastern Ohio.

"I have been with my loving husband, Marc, now for 16 years [married for nine]," Winchester said. "We

**'While I was a decent scorer for my team, I like to think of myself as a hustler and playmaker on the court.'**

**Trisha Dreslinski Winchester**  
Edgewood graduate on being inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame

actually played on the same T-ball team together at the Kingsville Little League.

"While we attended the same Buckeye schools, Marc was a year ahead of me and we didn't connect until the summer of 2008.

"Life is all about timing, right? Marc was also friends with my brother Joe, and somehow he got her number. The rest of my time at Hofstra, Marc made the trek from Ohio to visit me in New York for college more times than he can count and we've been having fun ever since."

The Winchesters have two boys, Jack, 4, and Carter, 2.

"Jack just started playing basketball at the YMCA and after his first practice has not stopped talking about it to friends and family," Winchester said. "It was so neat to see him so proud after he luckily made a hoop."

Though her time is limited now, Winchester continues to participate in sports.

"Wherever there's a ball and people who want to play, I'm in," she said. "My husband plays a strong game of PIG, and that competition makes the game fun, especially when he loses [I'll give him credit, though, we're about 50/50]."

"I enjoy being outside with all my boys, hiking, riding bikes, camping. I have nieces and nephews around the same age as my boys so it's been fun to watch them grow up together. Marc and I are very fortunate to have the village we do, and it's been a beautiful thing watching our boys develop relationships with their grandparents."

# DeJesus showed his versatility at Geneva

**BY CHRIS LARICK**  
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In 1982, Geneva and Harbor battled it out for the Northeastern Conference boys basketball championship.

Geneva's Eagles narrowly won the first game between the teams in Fawcett Gymnasium.

One enterprising sports writer who lived in Geneva promoted the second game to be held on the Eagles' court, in the Star Beacon, and there was such a big crowd the game was also shown on closed circuit in the auditorium at the old Geneva High School to accommodate the overflow.

The game was a classic. Harbor was coached by future Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame Coach John Higgins and three future Hall of Fame players, Dana Schulte, Dean Hood and Andy Juhola, then a sophomore.

Geneva could boast of two All-County guards in Antonio (then called Ralph) DeJesus and Rick Malizia. Both teams also had good supporting casts.



PHOTO SUBMITTED

**Geneva graduate Antonio DeJesus will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame during its ceremony on Sunday night at the New Leaf Event Center in Conneaut.**

Geneva's other starters included Rob Merrell, Tim Leary and Rick Hunt. Dave Nicholson was the sixth man.

DeJesus, who will be inducted into the

Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame on Sunday, remembers his role in the game this way.

"We were playing Harbor and Rick Malizia

and I were controlling the whole game," DeJesus said. "We were just kids having fun, but Bill [Koval] yelled at us because we were ball-hogging."

"We would bring it down the court. Either he would shoot it or I would. We would miss a shot. Bill screamed at us and said, 'Hot shot Malizia and his buddy don't know how to run a play that we were supposed to ... Lol, so funny.'"

That's not how I recall the game and I doubt it's the way Harbor's team and Higgins recall it either, but it does reflect, to some degree, the relationship the Geneva guards and Koval had when they took a few too many liberties on the court.

The Eagles wound up winning the game and, with it, the Northeastern Conference championship for the second year in a row.

It should be noted that Koval and DeJesus had a long, mutually profitable relationship.

According to DeJesus, "When I was in grade school, I was going to the varsity basketball games [his brothers

**'You name it, I played all positions.'**

**Antonio DeJesus**  
Geneva graduate on being inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame

Willie and Louis DeJesus also played for Koval]. Watching these guys play, I was lucky enough to go on the bus to all the away games and sit next to Bill Koval.

"I was the waterboy. On Saturdays, I got to go to the varsity practices. As I was growing up, obviously I was improving."

One of the reasons DeJesus improved so much is that he was always playing, beginning with his brothers, Willie and Louie.

Ernie Pasqualone, another Eagles Hall of Famer, often joined the games in the DeJesus driveway. Later, Richy and later, yet, Louie's kids, Nara, Rhea and Kyle joined the action.

"Bill always had his eyes on me as a basketball player," Antonio said. "I never got to play freshman basketball as I moved up playing JV,

which was so exciting.

"I would say Bill Koval is one of the greatest high school basketball coaches."

The ACBF's directors agreed, making Koval a member of its first Hall of Fame class in 2003.

His biography was the first Hall of Famer's to appear in the Star Beacon.

Koval went 325-248 in his 27 years as Geneva's head coach.

Antonio is actually the fourth DeJesus to enter the ACBF Hall of Fame, following his brother Richy (2022) and his nieces Nara and Rhea (Louis' daughters) in 2017.

It was only natural, as a member of that family, that he started playing basketball early.

Standing 6-feet-0, he usually played guard, but sometimes forward for the Eagles.

"You name it, I played all positions," DeJesus said.

He averaged 23 points a game as a senior.

Though DeJesus became known for his basketball prowess, it was not his favorite sport.

# Notte developed close relationships at Saint John and Paul

BY CHRIS LARICK  
sports@starbeacon.com

During Angela Notte's high school years, the Saint John and Paul girls teams were small in numbers.

There were just 31 students in Notte's 2006 graduating class and only about half of those were girls. The entire population of the four grades at SJP was about 121, less than most county schools have in their graduating class.

But the Heralds' achievements on the court were much greater than one would expect considering their size. "I thought we were pretty good, especially for our size," said Notte, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Hall of Fame on Sunday. "I felt like we were able to compete not only in the ESC, where we were champs for three of my four years, but we regularly played some other teams from the county such as Edgewood, Lakeside, and Conneaut and could compete year after year."

When Notte was young, probably 5 or 6, she followed her brothers, Jimmy and Josh, into the YMCA basketball program. Both of her brothers went on to play for the Heralds' boys team and were major influences and motivators for her career.

When she reached varsity, Notte played point guard at about 5-foot-4. She considers herself lucky to have shared the court with many other talented athletes from SJP, such as Kaitlin Tin-

ney, the sister of ACBF Hall of Famer Kelly; Stephanie Houser; Brittaney Pope; Mary Kane; Jennifer Laurello; Abby Svigelj; Nicole Pawlowski; Mallory Johnson; Cali Orlando; Jessica Looman and Wendy Milano.

The Heralds were coached by Nick Iarocci, who had known many of his players for years.

"We called him 'Roc,'" Notte said. "He was not only our basketball coach, he was like family. It was hard not to love Roc. He was always nice to us and passionate about the game. He is an awesome individual, even if a little quirky on the sidelines. He would wear holes into his shoes from the amount of pacing he would do on the sidelines."

"He was a good coach, wonderful with us. He dealt with us well, disciplined us but was never mean. He made everybody feel important. Roc made basketball fun but never made us feel like winning or losing mattered more than having fun and being challenged. His spirit was contagious and made us passionate about the game. He is the reason I am in this position today."

One of the games Notte remembers best was against Edgewood her senior year.

"I hit a buzzer-beater in that game," she said. "Ed [Looman] and Joe Pete were televising the game [on closed circuit TV]. The Edgewood girls were our rivals. We had grown up playing sports and spent a lot that summer working out together. Some of my



Angela Notte, front row sitting, is pictured with her friends, including, from left, Alexis Abraham and Karly Krumins are also seated in the front row; middle row on the couch from left, Chris Burr, Jessica Harchalk, Mary Kane, Abbey Svigelj and Jennifer Laurello; Amber Acierno is pictured with her arms in the air. Notte will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame during its banquet on Sunday at the New Leaf Event Center in Conneaut.

friends and family still talk about that game and shot. It is a fun memory I will always hold onto.

"The next game was Senior Night against Lakeside. I remember the packed house against an inner-city rival. The energy was palpable throughout the building that night. Winning that game meant a lot and a wonderful way to finish on our home court."

Notte also has a negative memory of the last conference game she played for SJP. She turned the ball over late against Cornerstone Christian and it led to a loss that kept the team from winning its fourth straight ESC championship.

Iarocci kept track of all of his teams' statistics. During her four years with the Heralds, Notte scored 924 points, connecting on 38 percent of her 2-point field goals and 31 percent of her 3-pointers. She totaled 287 rebounds, 300 steals, 400 assists and 15 blocks, in addition to making 231 of her 437 free throws.

In her four years, the Heralds went 61-25 (28-4 in the ESC, with those three championships). Notte also played softball for four years and volleyball for two.

After graduation, she went to Slippery Rock University in Pennsylvania, where she earned an exercise science degree.

"I loved it there," she said of Slippery Rock. "It was a great experience. The distance from home was good and it was a nice size, about 8,000 or 9,000 students."

Notte then went on to graduate school at the University of Toledo where she earned her master's, then became a physician assistant at University Hospitals in Cleveland, where she will celebrate her 10th anniversary this month.

She works in cardiac surgery, spending the majority of her time in the operating room three days a week, split among the main campus, Ahuja and Lake West.

While at Slippery Rock, Notte played intramural

**'Some of the people I played sports with are still my best friends today and I see regularly.'**

**Angela Notte**  
Saint John and Paul graduate on being inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame

basketball for a couple of years. She didn't go out for the basketball team, instead concentrating on her studies.

These days she enjoys spending her free time with friends and family, many of her closest friends came from her time at SJP participating in sports.

"Some of the people I played sports with are still my best friends today and I see regularly," Notte said. "They have become very successful professionals and moms and overall wonderful people."

"Basketball brought Abbey Svigelj, Jennifer Laurello, Mary Kane and myself together. In softball, I grew close with Amber Acierno, Karly Krumins, Jess Harchalk, Alexis Abraham and Kristina Krumins."

Notte loves to travel, most recently returning from Aruba, and planning to visit Belize and Spain this year. She loves nature, hiking, and spending time outside. Her focus has been on staying present and enjoying each day as much as possible. She hopes to continue adventuring and seeing the world.

# Saint John's Condon wore many athletic hats in the county

BY CHRIS LARICK  
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Don Condon was a terror under the basket and on the boards at Saint John High School from 1963-1965.

But Condon had another, much more gentle side altogether.

Despite standing about 6-foot-3, Condon, a 1965 Herald graduate who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Hall of Fame on Sunday, was perfectly capable of battling Ashtabula's Jim Gilbert (variously listed between 6-11 and 7-1) for points and rebounds.

John McEndree, Condon's neighbor and lifelong friend, remembers a game the Heralds played against Gilbert and the Panthers, a 52-39 loss on Jan. 23, 1965.

"I think Don shot the ball four times and Gilbert blocked it all four," McEndree said. "Don would get it back and

shoot again. Finally, Don faked a shot and went between Jim Gillespie and Doug Featsent for a layup."

According to then-Star Beacon Sports Editor Jim Landis (a member of the ACBF Hall of Fame as a contributor), "Condon had six of his shots blocked by Gilbert, but never lost his spirit and drove around the big guy enough to net 20 points in that game."

For that senior season, Condon averaged 17.4 points and 14.5 rebounds per game as Saint John, struggling to keep up with the bigger schools of the Northeastern Conference, went 7-12.

Condon was a unanimous choice for first team All-City Honors (a big award in those days) as well as first-team All-Ashtabula County and All-NEC.

At that time, only five starters were named to the first-team all-star-

**'Don was a super player, an all-around athlete. He taught me how to play sports.'**

**John McEndree**  
on Don Condon's posthumous induction into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame. Condon died in 2022

squads. In the Class A sectionals, Condon put on a noteworthy appearance. In the first game against Burton, a 73-61 victory, he had 21 points and 19 rebounds.

He topped that with 27 points and 20 rebounds in a 61-56 loss to Pymatuning Valley in the sectional finals. Condon was selected to the first-team Class A all-sectional team for his efforts.

In 15 of Saint John's 19 games that year, Condon had a double-dou-

ble in points and rebounds, with highs of 27 points and 25 rebounds.

"He was the best player on our team," said Alan DiMare, another of Condon's friends who was a year younger. "When we entered the NEC, we didn't have a gymnasium, a track or a baseball field."

"Our gym didn't open until six games into Don's senior season. We had a lot of disadvantages. Our preseason conditioning consisted of running up and down the hallway."

Though a fierce competitor, Condon, called "Pumper" for his efforts on the basketball team, was known by his friends as a peacemaker in confrontations.

"I was about 5-10 and he was 6-2 or 6-3," McEndree said. "He was my bodyguard. He would take people aside and talk to them [if they gave me trouble]. He was a big boy, but he would just talk to them."

"Don was a super player, an all-around athlete. He taught me how to play sports. We had an obstacle course in my backyard we used to play on. He was a sweetheart."

"Don loved everyone and everyone loved Don," Don's widow, Sharon said. "I met Don on a blind date and we were together 53 years. I'm from Wickliffe originally. My uncle, Damon Fish, and Jimmy Gillespie set us up."

"He was wonderful for me and I think I was wonderful for him."

Condon played for Saint John as a freshman, junior and senior. He missed his sophomore season, but McEndree can't remember why.

For some reason, Smokey Cinciarelli, the Heralds coach at the time, kept Condon on the bench for the early



**Saint John graduate Don Condon will be posthumously inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame during its ceremony on Sunday night at the New Leaf Event Center in Conneaut.**

part of his junior year. When he finally inserted Condon into the starting lineup, he became Saint John's leading scorer at about 16 points per game.

He also excelled in football for Saint John as a lineman and was good enough to win a scholarship to Kent State. Condon played for the Golden Flashes for two years before family problems caused him to quit school.

After college, he continued in sports, pitching for championship Spot Cafe softball teams for many years, traveling as far as Las Vegas in tournaments.

He was also active in the community as a member and officer of East Ashtabula Club and a member of the Legion and North End Club.

Condon continued to use his love basketball and became a referee, a job he loved and did for 10 years.

"I used to go to games just to watch him refer-

ee, he was that good," McEndree said.

"It was Don's plan to make a career of refereeing," Sharon Condon said. "That's what he really wanted to do, but because of an injury, he couldn't."

He continued to contribute in sports, taking lessons to become a high school basketball scorekeeper, which he did at Harbor for many years. Of course, he was very good at that job, too.

Condon died on June, 28, 2022 at the age of 74.

Don and Sharon were co-owners of Lake Shore Lanes and Patio Lounge for 10 years. He enjoyed life tremendously, celebrating St. Patrick's Day with friends and watching his children and grandchildren play sports.

Condon loved the Cleveland Browns and was a season ticket-holder for 25 years.

The Condons had four children: Rick (Debbie) Twaro, Holly (John) Karban, D.J. Condon and Tiffany Condon-Noble; grandchildren Ricky, Nicky, Kevin, Kelly, Makenna, Isiah, Ireland, Tanner and Quinn; and great grandchildren Madison, Mickey, Sam, Clayton and Alaina. He is also survived by his sister Donna Estok and his nephews Matt (Cahill), Carey and Todd Estok.

"Don coached Little League for all his kids," Sharon said. "He encouraged them to play all sports. Quinn surprised him the most when she decided she wanted to wrestle for Lakeside, but he was there for her. He never missed any games that any of them played, even through college."

"To us, he was the best, you know, the best father, the best everything. He was a great guy. I just miss him terribly. He was great to his kids and grandkids."

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# Nagy part of Jefferson’s boys’ team success in late 1990s

BY CHRIS LARICK  
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Entering the old Jefferson High School gym in the late 1990s, one couldn’t help noticing all of the championship banners in the rafters.

For girls basketball fans, those banners were doubtlessly a source of pride in the great teams Rod Holmes coached.

For those who supported the boys basketball teams, or played for them, they could be almost a mockery.

“Jefferson [the boys team] wasn’t very good,” said 1999 Falcons graduate Jon Nagy, who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation’s Hall of Fame on Sunday. “We always heard about a team in the 80s who won the NEC, but that was about it.

“Meanwhile you have this Rod Holmes [girls] dynasty where the women’s basketball teams are just so successful in winning. We wanted it. We’re like, ‘Why can’t we be like that?’”

Nagy’s “we” referred to a group of four boys in the class of ‘99 — three besides himself — that dedicated themselves to bringing a boys championship, and the banner that accompanied it, to their gymnasium.

The other three were Steve Zigmund, Adam Hruska, and Kevin Bush, and the “core four” eventually brought that championship to Jefferson — but it wasn’t quick and it wasn’t easy.

By the fifth grade, he was playing in a league in Jefferson that gave him tournament exposure.

“That was my first real experience competing,” Nagy said. “From fifth to the seventh grade, I had one of the best coaches you could find in Rick Havens. He was a phenomenal man who spent a ton of time with us.

“He was so awesome at teaching us the fundamentals. He lectured me, ‘You have to be able to make left-handed layups, you’ve got to be able to execute against pick-and-rolls, box-out with authority every time.’ He got us to watch game film in the seventh grade when no one was doing that. He gave us a foundation to be successful.”

When the group of four reached the ninth grade, they helped fill

some holes on the Falcons varsity roster. Both Nagy and Zigmund were called up to the varsity.

“We left our core group, but when we came back together our senior year, we knew we could do it,” Nagy said.

That’s not to say the foursome was obsessed with basketball. They all played multiple sports. But Nagy, for one, had honed his skills in AAU basketball and that became his major sport.

“Looking back, the new thing then was AAU basketball,” he said. “Steve Zigmund and I got to play on the Knights of Columbus B team. The A team had some older classmates like [Edgewood’s Steve Kray] and ([Harbor’s] Ryan Turner, just some amazing athletes. It was cool being on the cutting edge and playing some regional tournaments at that level.”

When Nagy reached the varsity team, he was coached by Steve Locy.

“The coach that touched me the most was Steve Locy,” Nagy said. “He just had a different style. I think he was truly inspiring.

“You know as 16-18 year olds, you’re not looking too far ahead. Mr. Locy had the ability to motivate and get you to focus. He passed the concept that you could do something special and it always registered with me personally. I think when we got out of sorts, like we weren’t taking practice seriously or we weren’t achieving what we should in games, he would always allude to a concept, ‘Hey, you only get so many years on the stage.’ I found him to be a great leader of young athletes.

“We still talk and are in contact. He’s now always running and placing in marathons and I constantly try to get him out west to race with me. Someday we’ll make it happen.”

When Nagy was in the seventh grade, he was 6-foot, but he grew only another inch.

“I topped out at 6-1,” he said. “I played forward, but got to handle the ball a lot, which I really loved.”

Among his other teammates, Zigmund was the long-range shooter.

“He inherited his father [Mick, a Hall of Famer’s] skills,” Nagy said. “He was lethal,



Jefferson graduate Jonathan Nagy is pictured with his children, Mia (left) and Owen. Nagy will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame during its ceremony on Sunday at New Leaf Event Center in Conneaut.

**‘Getting my swagger back and us coming together like that, with our backs against the wall was phenomenal and was the peak moment of my high school career.’**

**Jon Nagy**  
Jefferson graduate on earning a share of the NEC boys basketball title in the 1998-99 season

and could turn around a game in a flash by popping three threes in a row. He often drew the box-and-one, so I got the benefit of going one-on-one with bigger/slower guys, which tended to work out well. I owe him about 10 points per game.

“Adam Hruska had the handles and could jump out of the gym. Kevin Bush played down low at 6-3 or 6-4 and kept the paint safe.”

That group of Falcons hit their stride in the 1998-1999 season, Nagy’s senior year, when they split the NEC championship with Harbor and its star at the time, Ken Vanyo.

They got off to a slow start, though, losing three games early in the season to Conneaut, Harbor and Harvey.

“Our hopes of putting up our first banner were fading after our slow start,” Nagy said. “Kicking off the second half of the season, we had to play Conneaut, Harbor and Harvey, the three teams who beat us up front, all in one week [because of snow-day cancellations].

“We knew that week that if we just didn’t come out winning them all, we just didn’t have a chance because we had such a clunky start.

“I had the worst game of my season with six points against Conneaut the first time around, but got my first 30-point against them in the rematch that we won convincingly. We used that momentum to ultimately go on a run the rest of the season.”

The Falcons also defeated Harbor and Harvey to share the NEC title with the Mariners and claim that banner.

“Getting my swagger back and us coming together like that, with our backs against the wall, was phenomenal and was the peak moment of my high school career,” Nagy said.

Nagy, who also was all-conference in football and baseball at Jefferson, was a second-team All-NEC choice as a junior when he averaged 9.9 points per game.

He moved up to first-team as a senior, when he averaged 19.9 points and was voted Star Beacon All-Ashtabula

Co-Player of the Year, sharing the honor with Vanyo. Nagy was an honorable mention All-Ohio selection who averaged 6.1 rebounds, 1.5 assists and 1.7 steals per game as a senior.

But a 6-1 forward is an unlikely candidate for Division I college basketball, a fact Nagy pretty much admitted to himself.

“I was pretty realistic about my basketball career,” he said. “I did visits with Baldwin-Wallace, Thiel and Case-Western Reserve. Then Youngstown State worked up a full-academic ride [scholarship] for me, where I could compete with the walk-ons and practice with the team the first half of the year.

“I quickly realized that I wasn’t a Division I athlete. I was just in over my head and they were bigger and faster.”

He transferred to Miami of Ohio after his freshman year.

“That worked out really well,” Nagy said. “I have no regrets leaving the game of basketball ... it was the right move, it allowed me to be a college kid and it set me up professionally.”

He graduated with a finance degree in 2002, then later went on to get an MBA at Arizona State. While at ASU, he was recruited to work at Apple in the San Francisco Bay, where he worked in the hardware division: planning, building and

shipping iPhones and iPads around the world.

After working with Apple, Nagy moved on to Square Inc., a then small start-up company in San Francisco that was revolutionizing the point-of-sale process by specializing in credit-card readers.

“That was a golden time in the SF tech scene,” he said. “I was able to help launch the first iPhone and had the pleasure of being around great minds like Steve Jobs and Jack Dorsey.”

He then moved to Portland after the birth of his first child and became a stay-at-home dad for two years before going back to work for Adidas in their global basketball unit.

“There I was in global brand strategy for the basketball unit,” Nagy said. “It was was full-circle in terms of basketball, working for one of the major sneaker companies. My role was to set up the three-to-five-year business plans that included product lineups, athlete endorsements and campaigns.”

He worked for Adidas for four years. Recently, Nagy decided to leave the corporate career world and become an entrepreneur.

He is in the process of starting a financial planning firm called Alpine Road Financial, in which he will offer fixed fee financial planning services for clients all over the U.S.

“Personal finance has always been a passion of mine,” Nagy said. “I am now looking forward to serving clients and helping them set up their finances so they can focus on living their best lives.”

Nagy has been married to Mariah, a former Division I track athlete whom he met in San Francisco for 10 years. The couple now lives in Bend, Oregon with their children, Mia, 9, and Owen, 7.

“I don’t play as much basketball these days,, but I stay active all year around in different ways,,” he said. “Bend is a mountain town in the middle of Oregon, a real paradise for outdoor sports, including skiing and mountain biking.

“My kids are super fast on skis/bikes and there are a lot of great athletes to chase around the mountains of Bend.”

# FIRST: Lakeside graduate SmithJones to be inducted into ACBF Hall of Fame

**FROM PAGE B1**

during her career, which ended after she scored her 1,224th point.

As a result of her prowess, she has earned the distinction of being the first Lakeside graduate, male or female, to become a member of the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame.

Jones grew up in an area of Ashtabula that was filled with athletes, athletes she took note of, especially in one sport.

“Basketball just always stood out to me,” she said. “I can recall watching kids playing and thinking to myself, ‘I can do that.’ Around the age of 9, I really started to take it a little more seriously. My father’s friend would help me with my shooting form, and from there I practiced daily.”

That practice led to playing with a Saybrook Elementary team coached by Terry Tulino and John Anservitz in the fifth grade, as well as an AAU traveling squad coached by Bryce

Seymour that went all over the east coast.

“My early-on coaches provided me with great fundamentals,” Jones said. “While playing AAU basketball, I would often play against much older kids. I believe this allowed me to improve my overall game.”

Her teammates throughout school included guards Shay Shelby and Angelica Starkey, in addition to forward Liz Wilson.

Jones played guard at 5-foot-2, growing eventually to 5-7.

In high school, she played with an entirely new group of girls that included Kayla Curtis, Shakaria Hunt, Chyni Coleman, Darlene Bot and Miranda Newsome to name a few.

“Shakaria, Darlene and I were guards,” she said. “Chyni, New and Curt were forwards.”

When she became a freshman, Jones was coached by Mike Hassett.

“I spent one season with him and I learned a lot from him,” Jones said. “I used to think he was a tough coach

when I started varsity. His main attributes were that he was very knowledgeable about the game. Looking back on it, I believe he just believed in us and wanted us to believe in ourselves.”

Rob Livingston coached the Lakeside varsity at the time and Jones spent her sophomore through senior years under his tutelage.

“He’s the best coach I’ve ever had,” Jones said. “He pushed me to limits that I didn’t even know existed within myself.

“I can remember one time we were goofing off during practice when we should have been more serious. To the baseline we go to run, and all I can remember him saying is that he’s forgotten more basketball than we’d ever know. And I assure you, he was completely right.

“Over those next three years, I learned so much from him, not only about basketball but how to carry myself as a person. I used to think that him having us dress up for games

was a waste. Even that had a lesson in it and I appreciated him so much more for it. Our film sessions were flawless and just to be able to pick his brain about certain sets. He was so knowledgeable about the game. As soon as we bought into his system our whole program turned around for the better. His main attributes were his knowledge about the game of basketball and his willingness to bring the best out of whom-ever he came in contact with.”

Jones was called up to the varsity her freshman year. The Dragons weren’t very successful at first.

“We won two games that year,” she said. “As I progressed through high school, our record become better. Our sophomore year I think we won maybe seven games and from there we reach at least 15 wins a season after.”

Jones received MVP and offensive player of the team selection her sophomore, junior and senior seasons and was

selected as the ACBF girls’ Player of the Year as a senior. In addition to scoring those 1,224 points, she led or tied for made 3-pointers her junior and senior seasons.

Though she devoted most of her athletic time to basketball, she gave one other sport a try at Lakeside.

“I ran track my freshman and sophomore year,” Jones said. “It wasn’t really a sport I enjoyed, but it kept me in shape for the upcoming basketball season.”

Jones went on a couple of college visits to John Carroll, but ultimately settled on Lakeland Community College, where she played basketball.

“The experience was great,” she said. “I learned a lot and ultimately figured out what path I wanted to take in life.”

She graduated with an associate degree in applied science in medical assisting. Since then, Jones has worked various jobs in the health care field, from medical assistant to STNA.

At Lakeside, she met her husband, Dallas Jones, Sr.

“He and I have been together for 17 years and have been married for 15 years,” Jones said. “We have four children. My oldest daughter is named Laylah, 13. I also have two sons, Dallas Jr. 12, and London 9. Our youngest is a daughter, Senój who is 2 years old.”

Though she doesn’t have much time for sports these days, Jones admits to picking up “a basketball here and there. I enjoy shooting pool and my husband has made me into a video game fanatic.

“I’m a mother so a lot of my time is devoted to my family. I enjoy watching them grow and doing various activities with them. Whatever they want to do is what I do. My husband joined the marines right after high school so early on we traveled a lot.

“We still travel till this day, but I love to take my kids to different states and allow them to explore. “

# Brosovich utlitized height advantage to shine for GV

BY CHRIS LARICK  
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You can't teach height, which is one reason so many high school basketball coaches patrol a school's hallways in search of tall students.

One day a sharp-eyed Grand Valley coach spotted an unfamiliar face in the hallway. To his delight, the coach had to glance upward to look Mike Brosovich in the eye.

Brosovich remembers it this way.

"I started playing basketball just to make friends in a new school," he said. "As a little kid I played football in Chardon's Lions Club program and played baseball in the Munson Baseball League.

"My parents were divorced and my mom had custody during the week. When she moved to the Grand Valley School District in seventh grade, it made more sense to go to Grand Valley than drive back to Chardon. I was in between my sports I played growing up.

"At that time I had a growth spurt and was taller than most kids my age. The new tall kid was encouraged to play basketball and I thought I knew nobody in this school and knew nothing about basketball. Prior to that year, I may have played a dozen games of HORSE and that's it."

The first beneficiary of the Mustangs' new find was Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Famer Mick Zigmund, who coached seventh grade basketball for Grand Valley at the time.

Then came Mike Dingman in the eighth grade, Shane Blanford when he was a freshman and Russ Bell for the JV team. By the time he reached varsity status with ACBF Hall of Famer Tom Henson, Brosovich had developed his skills and was a proven commodity.

"I think all of them added a little piece of their personalities and work ethic to me and the guys that I played with," Brosovich said of his coaches.

From never having played the game, Brosovich, a 2001 Grand Valley graduate, improved enough to become Star Beacon All-Ashtabula County Co-Player of the Year with Conneaut's Jeff Dinger in 2000-2001. He will be inducted with 10 other men and women into the ACBF Hall of Fame during its induction ceremony on Sunday.

At 6-foot-6m Brosovich played the post for the Mustangs. Zach Baker and Chad Limestall were the point guards, he recalls, with a host



The Brosovich family includes, from left, Mike, Arlo, Max, Dean, Cecilia and Hannah. Mike Brosovich, a Grand Valley graduate, will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame during its induction ceremony on Sunday at the New Leaf Event Center in Conneaut.

of juniors that included Nick Smith and Greg Moyer contributing to the team.

As his coach, Henson had a big effect on Brosovich.

"He was a great person and was always there if you needed something," Brosovich said. "He would find a way to help you out. I remember once we had a snow day and we still had practice. "I must have not had a driver's license yet because he came and picked me up in Harts-grove for practice, but before we went back to the gym we had to swing by coach Bell's place and dig him out of the snow.

"When I was a kid coach Henson was a 'You either hated him or loved him' guy. As an adult, I reflect back on it and those who hated him also were guys that didn't want to put the time and effort into the game. In college football and as an assistant coach, in high school football, you hear the chatter of guys saying they don't like coach because of this and that ... but again you see those are the guys that are not giving their all when it comes to it."

Brosovich admits to being a person that doesn't dwell on past achievements.

"I was a do-it -and-for-get-it kind of player," he said. "When seeing old friends they will remind me and say things like, 'Remember when?'"

"The only game that bothered me for a long time was a game, I believe it was against Ashtabula Harbor, maybe. There was another post player that had a chip on his shoulder and the whole game

## 'The new tall kid was encouraged to play basketball.'

**Mike Brosovich**  
Grand Valley graduate who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame during its banquet on Sunday

was very physical and I had four fouls on me. I went for a loose ball at mid-court and got there. He jumped on top of me and I twisted to get rid of the ball, and the referee said I had thrown a punch. He ejected me.

"I wish he would have just given me a foul and I would have been sitting and not out for the next two games. We watched the tape over and over again in the library and I'm not sure how anyone thought a punch was thrown. It was tough sitting on the bench for two games. In one of those games I had to sit for was against Bloomfield, which at the time was not a very good team, I don't think they had a player over 6-feet tall. I remember the guys saying, 'If you were playing we would have fed you the ball in the paint until coach T, took you out. '"

During his career at Grand Valley, Brosovich became the school's third-leading rebounder with 495 (Jeremiah Arrington recently passed him) and was 10th in scoring with 855 points.

In his senior year, Brosovich averaged 22.3 points, 11.0 rebounds and .9 blocks per game. He was named first-team all-conference, all-county and all-district, in addition to being third-team All-Ohio.

"I always joke with my eighth-graders when they ask me if I was good at basketball,

saying 'I was okay. I was third team all-state,'" Brosovich said "Some guy named LeBron James was first team and player of the year in my division when I was a senior.

Brosovich also played football and baseball at Grand Valley.

"I had a very successful football career in high school," he said. "Baseball was the sport I really enjoyed playing, but I was an average player in my opinion."

The first in his family to go to college, Brosovich found making a selection as mysterious a process as most of us who found ourselves in that situation.

"I had no idea how anything really worked," he said. "I went on a handful of college visits. Colleges were looking at me for football and basketball. They were mostly OAC [Ohio Athletic Conference] schools and small colleges like Hiram to play basketball. I had a couple recruitment letters from Buffalo and Colorado, but no one kicking the door down and no coaches were sitting in my living room."

He wound up going to Baldwin-Wallace University to play football.

"But I really didn't know what I wanted to do and I thought at that time I'd have more opportunities for internships closer to Cleveland," Brosovich said. "I ended up missing playing basketball and I stopped in and asked if I could play my sopho-

more year."

Brosovich played one year of basketball at B-W, his sophomore year, but continued to play football there.

"I broke my ankle going into my senior year and sat out," he said. "I was able to shift my schedule around, delay graduation for one more semester and play football my fifth year.

"By that time, I had chosen my major. I graduated with a bachelor of science degree in middle school education with a focus on science, social studies and reading in 2006."

But after graduation, he found the teaching market flooded and it was tough to find a job.

"I didn't use my degree right out of college," Brosovich said. "While in college, I was working for Integrated Handling and Storage Resources, which was a small company specializing in the design and installation of custom storage and retrieval systems.

"I was responsible for going into old warehouses or companies that were relocated to dismantle their shelving and storage units and then reassemble in new locations. The pay was great and I was able to travel across the country for some jobs.

"I enjoyed the west side of town so I was looking in that area [for a teaching job]. Eventually, I met my future wife and she was also looking for a teaching position, I remember sitting in the Lakewood Library with both of us with laptops filling out application after application.

"Her family was from a little town southeast of Columbus called Litho-

polis. We decided, 'Let's start applying in Central Ohio and if we land something we'll move down there and stay with her parents until we find our own place and go from there.'" But the couple had to go even a little farther south to find work as teachers.

Mike landed his first teaching job at Chillicothe City Schools as an eighth-grade social studies teacher, while also serving as an assistant football coach and eighth-grade girls basketball.

"I was at Chillicothe for three years," he said. "Then a friend suggested I come coach with him at Amanda Clearcreek. I got a fourth-grade reading teacher job.

"Eventually a position opened up in eighth-grade science. I took that position and stayed in that position until COVID. During the pandemic, I became an instructional leader, mainly helping teachers to develop lessons for them to teach online. After a brief stint as an instructional mentor, I was hired as the elementary principal at Amanda Clearcreek Elementary School.

"I have the privilege of working with over 350 students in my 3-5 building," he said. "This is my third year as principal."

Hannah didn't find anything that first year and wound up subbing in Chillicothe, Circleville, and Teays Valley.

The following year she was hired for a third-grade position at Teays Valley Local Schools.

"We got married in 2011," Mike said. "We built a house just outside of Amanda and have four kids — Arlo,11, Cecilia, 9, Dean 7, and Max 5.

"Arlo enjoys playing basketball and baseball. His recreation baseball team has been very successful the past two years, winning the league championship twice in three years.

"Cecilia is a very talented artist and loves to dabble in everything. She is currently taking guitar lessons. She enjoys playing basketball and softball.

"Dean is our future linebacker. He is a spitting image of his father. He plays flag football and has a knack for finding the ball. He also plays basketball and baseball.

"Max is our youngest and he is a bundle of excitement. He is not interested in playing organized sports at this time. He has some funny one-liners as to why this is not the year. He is just as athletic as his older siblings in the backyard or basement."

Congratulations

to This Year's Hall of Fame Inductees and Scholar Athlete Award Winners!



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DEJESUS: Geneva graduate showed his versatility

FROM PAGE B5

Truckmen, a trucking company out of Harpersfield.

He then started his own warehouse and trucking company. Today, DeJesus lives in Naples, Florida and owns a dealership with Rhino, a company that manufactures a ceramic house and business material that looks like traditional latex paint but is guaranteed to last for at least 25 years.

"I've always been an entrepreneur," he said. "I got that drive growing up from my brothers, Louie and Willie. They are a big part of who I am today."

DeJesus also credits his teachers and coach-

es for any success he enjoys.

"My teachers and my coaches showed me how to respect and the value of life, Geneva High teachers, principals, staff all of them," he said.

Single, DeJesus has a son, Jesse.

He enjoys playing golf and pickleball and boating in his spare time.

"What's really cool is I still remain good friends with Rick Malizia," DeJesus said. "He lives five minutes from me in Florida and Joe Braat [another former Geneva athlete] does as well. We still hang out like we did in school."

# Regional basketball team made impact at Conneaut

BY CHRIS LARICK  
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Harry Fails coached the Conneaut Spartans for just three seasons. Fails had enjoyed a great basketball career for Rowe, leading the county in scoring in 1958 (19.3 points per game) and finishing second in 1959 (19.5). He returned to take over Conneaut High School's reins from Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation's first-class Hall of Fame coach Andy Garcia in 1968 and coached there until 1970.

But the ACBF thought enough of his contributions that he was elected to the third class of the Hall of Fame in 2005. The primary reason for his selection probably is the 1969-70 season, when the Spartans rolled to a 19-4 record and went all the way to the regional semifinals before bowing out of the tournament. That class ended an eight-year drought for Ashtabula County basketball team in regional appearances.

In 1968-1969, his first season, Fails had gone 17-5 with a sectional championship. That might not have surprised Conneaut people, since he had a history of winning with the Spartan eighth-grade, freshman and JV squads. Scott Humphrey, arguably Fails' best player, had been on all of those teams.

"He came up in the seventh and eighth grades," Humphrey later recalled. "He kind of came up with us.

"He also played for my dad [Stan Humphrey]. He was a heck of a coach. I played for Harry — that's kind of a cool thing. He was a great player."

Fails found it easy to identify with his charges, since he wasn't much older than them. "He had a lot to do with us being successful," Humphrey said. "Every time we got in a tough game, he diagrammed a play and it worked. We won a lot of close games like that.

"He was very innovative. We played every kind of defense. We pressed all the time. It was a big change from Andy [Garcia]. We pressed and scored off the press. If we needed to slow it down, we did."

Jeff Puffer added, "He was such a smart coach. He taught us everything. We could play the 1-3-1 trap, the matchup zone or man-to-man."

Fails coached the Spartans only one more year. Conneaut went 12-7 in 1970-71, making Fails' three-year record 48-19 (.716).

But Fails felt he wasn't getting fully supported by the school administration. He got fed up with his teaching load and found another job at Alliance High School. "It's a long story," Fails



PHOTO SUBMITTED

Conneaut 1969-70 regional qualifying basketball team included, front left, assistant coach Paul Freeman, John Colson, Jeff Puffer, Scott Humphrey, Al Razem, Tim Richards and coach Harry Fails; back from left: Dave White, Greg Williams, Rob Ferl, John Aho, Bill Braxton, Jeff Gross and manager Dan VanCourt. Mike Mucci is not pictured.

said. "The principal was Larry Colson. The year before, I had volunteered to take the girls team for him. I said I'd do it and we went 5-1 and were co-champs of the girls league.

"The next year, they assigned me to six classes [to teach] with three preparations. I said, 'I'll be leaving,' said I wouldn't be there."

Fails was a huge success at Alliance. The Aviators went 228-103 in his 16 years there.

He retired in 1987 when his son reached high school age, saying he had no regrets about retiring. Fails died in 2013 at the age of 71. He had been inducted into the ACBF Hall of Fame in 2005. In his first two years at Conneaut, he won the Northeastern Conference championship and was named as the Star Beacon Ashtabula County Coach of the Year, the first man ever to accomplish the latter feat two years in a row.

The best player on the Spartan team that made it to the big-school regionals in 1969-70 was Humphrey. He started for Garcia as a sophomore and became a star for Fails, who had benefited from Humphrey's skills for years even before he took over from Garcia. In Humphrey's junior year, he blossomed and helped an inexperienced Conneaut squad to a 9-11 record.

"Andy had lost six seniors to graduation the year before," he said of his sophomore year. "Normally, I wouldn't have started a sophomore, but I guess I was born [to Stan and Betty Lou] at the right time."

The first player of that year's team to make it to the ACBF Hall of Fame in 2009, Humphrey finished with 1,049 points in an era that had no 3-point line.

He scored 465 points in his senior year, averaging 20.3 points per game and sharing the Star Beacon Ashtabula County Player of the Year honors with Geneva's Randy Knowles.

At one time, Humphrey held the single-game scoring record at Conneaut, scoring 46

points in a game against Pymatuning Valley.

He also held Spartan records for rebounds in a game with 25 and for a season with 236. Humphrey scored 29 points and had 12 rebounds in the 62-60 loss to Akron Central Hower that ended the Spartans' season.

Fails held Humphrey in high regard.

"Scott was a great kid," Fails said. "We used him inside. I think it's fair to say he's one of the best players I ever coached."

Humphrey added, "I jumped center, but I played what you'd call a forward. Harry ran a shuffle offense, so everyone handled the ball. There was a lot of passing and cutting. I ran a lot of post-ups and got a lot of points off putbacks. He had me help break the press when it was needed."

Though listed at 6-foot-4 in the program, Humphrey admits to being closer to 6-2.

Fails relied on Humphrey's ability to find cracks in the defense and to serve as a tough rebounder.

"Scott was real smooth," he said. "He wasn't very fast, but he was just so smooth. He had great moves.

"Scott was a great team player. He always carried out his role very well."

The team he took to regionals was led by Humphrey, who was joined by Al Razem, Jeff Puffer, Tim Richards, John Colson, Mike Mucci and Dave White. Others on the team were seniors Greg Williams and John Aho, juniors Jeff Gross and Bill Braxton and sophomore Rob Ferl.

Humphrey, Puffer and Razem had moved up with Fails, from the eighth-grade team to the freshman team to the JV team and then the varsity.

By the time the 1969-70 season rolled around, Colson and sophomore Tim Richards had joined Humphrey, Puffer and Razem in the "Iron Five."

"We played a lot of minutes," Humphrey said. "That's pretty much how it was. Jeff Gross came off the bench and so did Robbie Ferl and Dave White."

Humphrey, selected to the first-team all-county, all-NEC and all-state teams as a junior and senior, went to Mount Union and played two years there. But he became disenchanted with the coach and transferred to Youngstown State without playing basketball.

"I came to the realization nobody was going to pay me for playing basketball," he said.

Other than Humphrey, the Spartans didn't have much size. Razem, Puffer and Richards all stood 5-11 to 6-0. Colson reached 6-2. Ferl, who became the featured big man as a junior and senior, was 6-5, but didn't play much as a sophomore.

Fails had a different opinion.

"I don't feel the coach at Mount Union handled him right," he said. "He wanted Scott to play outside and I think he should have played him inside."

Instead, he finished his business degree at Youngstown State in 1975 and worked for many years as the chief financial officer of a couple companies. For several years he worked with AFLAC as a district manager. He and his wife retired a few years ago and now live west of Cleveland, in South Amherst.

Though the reserves rarely played, the reason the starters became known as the "Iron Five," point guard Puffer acknowledged their contributions when he went into the ACBF Hall of Fame in 2012.

"Those guys showed up every day for practice and helped us get better because they were so tough," he said. "They would have started on most teams."

Great scorers need someone to get them the ball. For Conneaut that year, the job often fell to Puffer.

Puffer was nearly as slender as his father, Jerry (whom he was inducted into the ACBF Hall of Fame with), at 5-11, 130 pounds.

"I think my teammates made me better," Puffer said. "And I think I made my teammates better. I was a flashy guy. You

'He was a heck of a coach. I played for Harry — that's kind of a cool thing. He was a great player.'

## Scott Humphrey

Conneaut graduate on coach Harry Fails. The 1969-70 boys basketball team will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame during its banquet on Sunday.

put the basketball in my hands and I swear I could run faster while dribbling than I could without the ball. People compared me to Pistol Pete Maravich and Larry Bird. I threw behind-the-back passes and no-look passes. If I had the ball and you were open, you got (the ball). If I had the ball, I would dish it off. I was 100 percent totally for the team.

Puffer, along with Razem, started as juniors in 1968-69. The point guard was selected to the All-NEC and Star Beacon All-Ashtabula County first teams as a senior.

He averaged 14.7 points and set a Conneaut record by making 13 of 16 free throws in a 29-point effort against Harbor. He led the Spartans in assists for a game (10) and a season (94). Puffer shot 45 percent from the field that year and his 101 made free throws also led the team.

After graduation in 1970, Puffer went on to Youngstown State, where he was coached by the legendary Dom Rosselli, who coached the Penguins for 38 years and compiled 600 victories.

He had gone to Youngstown State as a baseball player, but once he made the basketball team, Rosselli didn't want him to play baseball. Puffer played, though sparingly, as a freshman, then was redshirted the following year. He returned to the team and played from 1972-74.

"I didn't start a lot of games," Puffer said. "I worked my way up to a starter in '72-'73. Then, in winter semester, I got sick and had to sit out. I lost my starting position."

In Puffer's senior year at YSU, Rosselli brought in several younger players. Puffer didn't get to play much, but the Penguins made the NCAA Tournament that year.

"That was a lot of fun," he said.

Puffer graduated from YSU in 1974 with a degree in business administration. He has run his own insurance agency in Pennsylvania for many years.

Razem was the third senior starter on that team and had, with Puffer and Humphrey, moved up the ladder each year with Fails.

Razem, according to Humphrey, was a key component on the team.

"He was our defensive stopper," Humphrey said. "He guarded the other team's best offensive player and played the middle of the zone in our press."

Puffer added, "When we were in the sixth grade, Al Razem was 5-foot-11. He was our center. When

he was in the eighth grade he was still 5-11 and never grew."

Razem started at Edinboro on a college scholarship, but soon blew his knee out. He took his bachelor's at Edinboro and his master's in hydrogeology at South Florida.

Razem said he has been working in the hydrological field for "40 years and counting." Semi-retired, he still goes into work a few times a week. He now lives in Dublin, Ohio, near Columbus.

Colson, the only junior starter, was "the other big man," according to Humphrey. "He was the same size I was, about 6-2."

"He was our tallest starter, our center," Puffer said of Colson.

"He and I ran the pick-and-roll. Harry told him, 'When you set a pick, you roll. If you don't roll, you're coming out of the game.'" Colson became adept at running that offense with Puffer.

The other Spartans lost track of Colson, when he moved to Hawaii.

Richards beat out three Spartan seniors to start his sophomore season.

"He was such a steady player, so dependable," Puffer said. "He did all the little things — block out, rebound, was so consistent.

"When all else failed. Richards could hit that eight- to 10-foot jumper. He was really good at it."

Richards went on to play at Kent State, first under future Cavaliers coach Stan Albeck, and then for Rex Hughes.

When he graduated from Kent with a degree in industrial management, Richards went to work at General Electric and worked in that company's financial department for 45 years, including stints in Brecksville and Aurora.

He retired in 2022 and moved back to Conneaut.

Tim has been married to his high school sweetheart for 45 years. The Richards have three children: Marissa, Allison and Kyle.

Ferl, the other sophomore on the team, didn't play much that year, but developed into the Spartans' reliable big man the following two years.

Though he didn't play much as a sophomore, Fails started him in the district semifinal against Akron Central because of his height. (Akron had a 6-9 player). He scored six points in that game.

Ferl has a PhD in biology and became a molecular biologist and later a research scientist and professor at the University of Florida.

# Conneaut regional team showed capability the previous season

BY CHRIS LARICK  
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Of the Conneaut reserves in the 1969-70 regional basketball year, Mike Mucci filled in for Jeff Puffer when he came out of the game.

"I went against him in practice," Puffer said. "He beat me up, was a really good defender."

John Aho, another senior, was called "Bull-head" by Fails, Puffer remembers.

"He was famous for his foul shooting," Puffer added. "He once hit 57 in a row in practice. Nobody got close to him. He worked for a dock company later."

Jeff Gross, another sub, was a junior that year. In his senior year, he was selected as captain of the football, basketball and track teams.

Gross graduated from the Coast Guard Academy, commanded four Coast Guard cutters, then went on to teach math for 27 years at Poquosa, Virginia, and spent many years coaching, including many years as head track, girls basketball and cross country coach.

Fails called Greg Williams "Hatchet Man," according to Puffer.

"He was a defender who would run through

a brick wall. He was so muscular. He hit two foul shots that against Ashtabula that propelled us into the districts."

Williams is now retired but worked for many years as a manager at TJ Maxx in St. Petersburg, Fla.

Dave White "could have started for any other NEC team," Puffer said. "He had the best 12-15 foot bank shot I've ever seen. He was a great leaper and good ball handler."

Bill Braxton, a junior on that team, became the point guard after Puffer graduated.

"I spent a lot of time with him," Richards

said.

Braxton graduated from Ohio State with a bachelor's degree in political science and government.

He worked more than 18 years with IBM as a national business compliance manager and more recently as an operations manager for Corporate Cleaning, Inc. He now lives in the Columbus area.

The Spartans had shown signs of what they were capable of the year before their regional appearance when they went 17-5 with some notable wins.

After reaching the districts with a victory

over Ashtabula, the Spartans fell to powerful St. Joseph. Even that final loss turned out to be a blessing, in Scott Humphrey's eyes.

"I think losing that game helped prepare us for the next year," he said.

Before the 1969-70 season, coach Harry Fails did everything he could to prepare for his season, even to the point of taking the court against his players in practice.

"Back then, you didn't go to camps like they do now," Humphrey told Karl Pearson in 2009. "You didn't have open gyms and usually when

you played in the summer, you were outside.

"Harry loaded us up on the bus and took us down to Tallmadge and we played against all kinds of great competition there. He took us over to Farrell, which was the Pennsylvania state champion back then. We played against Akron Hoban. We played some great teams."

That year, Conneaut went through the season with just one Northeastern Conference loss, to Ashtabula.

They started the season by beating Girard, then fell to Erie

# PV graduate Readshaw: ‘Sports has been my guiding light’

**BY CHRIS LARICK**  
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Though he didn’t know it at the time, Craig Readshaw embarked on a whole new way of life when he visited one of his cousins in Thailand in 2008.

He enjoyed the experience so well he made it a yearly habit, then took the ultimate leap, moving there, a few years later.

Readshaw’s life has changed entirely. He lives in a huge house in the mountains of northern Thailand. Instead of having four seasons, he has basically two — hot and hotter.

because the cost of living is so reasonable, his state teachers retirement System check goes farther.

Readshaw, a 1971 graduate of Pymatuning Valley High School, could never have imagined any of this when he grew up in Salem, then moved with his family to Andover before his ninth grade in 1967.

His success at basketball at Pymatuning Valley will be acknowledged on Sunday when he is inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation’s Hall of Fame during its induction ceremony at the New Leaf Event Center in Conneaut.

Readshaw recalls that when he first began basketball at Salem in the fourth or fifth grade, each player was given a basketball.

“They gave each of us a basketball,” he said. “The basketball had hands on it [illustrating the way to shoot it]. That’s what the basketball said, so that’s what I did.

“I was way ahead of my time shooting. I could go out 20-30 feet and fling it.”

Readshaw was so far advanced that he never played on the same teams as his classmates until his junior year.

“We played one-on-one and I beat him in the first game,” Readshaw said. “He wanted another game and I beat him again. That’s the point when I realized that I was a lot better than I ever thought. That incident gave me the confidence that no one could ever stop me.”

Toward the end of his freshman year, Al McClung, his coach, sometimes used Readshaw on the varsity team.



PHOTO SUBMITTED

**Pymatuning Valley graduate Craig Readshaw played multiple sports for the Lakers, including basketball. He is now living in Thailand.**

“Between JV and varsity, I averaged 20 points a game [most of it as a member of JV],” he said. “In one JV game that we won, 35-32, I scored 32 of the 35 points.

McClung played a style of basketball Readshaw loved.

“He was way ahead of his time,” Readshaw said. “His philosophy was run, run, run ... fast break, full court and three-quarter court press, 1-2-1-1 trap.

“He was a stickler on fundamentals, boxing out and turning rebounds into fast breaks.

Readshaw and Ned Roach, inducted into the ACBF Hall of Fame in 2019, started as sophomores. Barry French, Al Sippola, Joe Gerrick and Bobby French were other starters at times.

Before his sophomore season, McClung pulled Readshaw aside and told him he was going to take the place of Lenny Lattimer, the 2023 ACBF Hall of Famer who had graduated, in leading the Lakers offense.

“Do what you want to do,” Readshaw said McClung told him. “Those were big shoes to fill.

“Ned Roach and I were a duo for three years,” Readshaw said of his teammate. “We knew each other forwards and backwards.

“He was a fantastic point guard who dribbled mostly left-handed but shot right-handed. He had eyes behind his head, he could pass the ball so well. Ned was an awesome foul shooter and rarely missed a field goal.”

Readshaw remembers being in the top three

or four in the county in scoring for three years.

“I think I averaged about 17 points a game,” he said. “I shot 58 percent from the field and 86 percent from the foul line.

He was able to rebound despite being what he calls “lanky.” As a freshman, he stood 6-foot-2, but weighed just 128 pounds.

“After my freshman year, I was done growing,” Readshaw said.

The Lakers were decent when he was a freshman, but joined the Northeastern Conference before his sophomore year.

Smaller than all schools in the league except Saint John, PV took its lumps.

“We held our own against schools our size but not against the bigger schools,” Readshaw said. “Conneaut’s 1968-69 team beat us 101-43 or so.”

A few games in his career stand out in his memory.

As a sophomore, Readshaw scored 38 points against Cardinal, making 17 of 21 shots (81 percent) from the field and four of four from the foul line. Three of his baskets were follow-ups of his own misses and the rest were from 20 to 30 feet.

That came on a Saturday night.

The previous day he scored 19 points in the second half of a Friday game against Harbor (he had missed two-and-a-half days with the flu that week, but returned for a half day of school on Friday and had to sit out the first half), connecting on nine of 13

field goals and his only free throw.

Readshaw also had 33 points against Maplewood and 26 against Cardinal, despite a box-and-one the Huskies used.

During his high school career, Readshaw was held below double-digits just once, as a sophomore against Jefferson.

In his junior and senior years he was an all-state selection in addition to being a first-team all-county player.

When he became a senior McClung moved on and was replaced by Bob Hitchcock, the ACBF first-ballot Hall of Famer.

“Bob liked to play slowdown ball,” Readshaw said. “We butted heads but learned to adjust to each other.”

The Lakers still scored 86 points against Newton Falls in an 86-81 win, a game in which Readshaw scored 28 points.

Readshaw earned 10 letters at PV, three in basketball, three in track, two in cross country and one year each in football and golf.

In his senior year of track, he won his four events (high and low hurdles, long jump and high jump) in every meet. He set school records in the high hurdles (15.3), long jump (18-10 ½) and high jump (6-2) that lasted for years.

When Readshaw graduated in 1971, the military draft had ended college deferments for awhile.

Eligible young men had to draw numbers from 1 to 365.

Readshaw drew 72, a relatively low number that meant he would almost automatically be drafted. He thinks that helped scare colleges away from offering him a scholarship.

“A few schools that were interested called me and said, ‘You’re going to be in the rice paddies (in Vietnam).’

Readshaw began his first quarter at Youngstown State, feeling sure he would get the call to go into the service.

After that quarter, Malone College in Canton expressed an interest in him as a basketball player.

He transferred there and played JV basketball as a sophomore, but got a job full time (while also a full-time student) working for Oho Edison,

**‘They gave each of us a basketball. The basketball had hands on it [illustrating the way to shoot it]. That’s what the basketball said, so that’s what I did.’**

## Craig Readshaw

Pymatuning Valley graduate who will be inducted into the Ashtabula County Basketball Foundation Hall of Fame during its banquet on Sunday

washing their big line trucks.

He graduated in four years, in 1975, with degrees in business education and psychology.

Readshaw planned on continuing to work for Ohio Edison, but decided to teach instead. To do that, he had to take two more courses and do his student teaching to become certified as a teacher. He added his master’s degree in curriculum instruction in 1982.

After graduation, he taught at Louisville for a half year and at Marlinton High School for a year-and-a-half before landing a job at Salem High School. He spent the rest of his 31-year career there, teaching business.

“My dad worked in Salem and knew the board president,” said Readshaw, who retired in 2007.

For 10 of those years, he was head basketball coach, a job at which he accumulated a 152-52 record. The Quakers went 20-4 in his first season of 1978, then 18-2 with a trip to the regional finals and 19-2 in 1980 with another trip to the regional finals. Each of those two years they were ousted by Cleveland East Shaw.

For those three years he was blessed to have Tammy Bailey, a 5-8 guard who was All-Ohio as a junior and senior and made academic All-American status in college at Malone.

“She could do it all, points, assists, rebounds,” Readshaw said.

Bailey, who was inducted into the Quakers’ Hall of Fame in 2006, had school records for a while with 19.8 points per game and 496 points in 1981.

“Everything I did coaching was from Coach McClung,” Readshaw said. “He was my guiding light.”

He was also influenced heavily by his father, Readshaw divorced in 2003 after a long marriage.

It was soon after retirement that he started

going to Thailand each year.

Readshaw eventually moved to Thailand and married a Thai wife, Mai, in 2016.

He has virtually adopted her son, “Mike,” 22, a junior at Papap University, who has taken Readshaw’s last name.

“Everything here costs a fraction of what it is in the states,” Readshaw said. “My health insurance costs \$1,200 a year, with no deductible and it never goes up until I use it. My property tax is \$1.80 a year.”

The temperatures in northern Thailand, where Readshaw lives, range from about 60 at night to the low 80s in daytime in the winter, to the 90s or 100s in daytime, 70-75 at night in the summer.

“It never gets higher than 102,” he said.

At that rate, not much clothing is needed to live in Thailand.

“I sold my deer farm in two weeks when I moved here,” he said. “I brought three suitcases of things and my Jack Russell terrier here.”

Readshaw has two children from his first marriage — Craig Jeremy, 41 and Tricia Ann, 40.

Williams, his father, played for the 1941 Oho state runner-up, Fairfield.

He flew 83 missions in a P-47 Thunderbolt figure plane in World War II, mostly in Belgium, Normandy and Germany and lived until he was 93. Readshaw’s uncle, Richard, died when his bomber went down in Italy.

Readshaw has always been an outdoorsman and continues to do that in Thailand. He raised whitetail deer in Salem for 21 years.

When he moved to Thailand, Readshaw began raising sambar deer.

“Sports has basically affected my whole life,” he said. “It taught me how to set goals and work hard to meet them, to meet adversity head-on and never give up. Sports has been my guiding light.”

## CONNEAUT: Boys basketball team showed capability the previous season

FROM PAGE B9

McDowell before reeling off seven straight wins, one of them a 99-43 beatdown of Jefferson.

After losing to Ashtabula, 73-63, they won five more straight, a span broken by Erie Prep.

They closed out the regular season with two one-sided wins — 60-34 over Harbor, and 102-49 Pymatuning Valley.

As they had done the previous year, the Spartans caught fire at tournament time.

They defeated Ashtabula in the rubber match of another three-game set, 53-45 in overtime, to win the sectional title.

“We were known as the Cinderella of the districts,” Puffer said. “In the districts, they said we had no chance.”

Conneaut defeated a loaded Harvey team, coached by John D’Angelo, 70-64 in their first game at districts.

“We were getting beat

by seven points at the half, but wound up winning by six,” Puffer said. “Harry made adjustments at the half. He was good at that.”

But the Spartans next faced a Willoughby South team that was ranked fourth in the state.

The game came down to the wire, according to Puffer.

“I was shooting a 1-and-1 [foul shot],” Puffer said. “We were up by one point with 10 seconds left and I had made 7 of 7. I practiced shooting foul shots a lot.

“I missed, but Scott Humphrey did a spin move [to get past his man]. The ball fell off to the left side and Scott put it back in to put us up by three. We let them have a layup with three seconds left, but at that time, the clock didn’t stop after a made basket and I let the time run out on them and we won, 60-59.”

After the game, Humphrey was chosen district tournament MVP.

In the regional semifinal game, Conneaut fell to Akron Central Hower, 62-60 to end hopes of making it to Columbus.

“We were down about 19 [points] with 2:43 to go and came back and lost by two,” Fails said. “One of our kids missed a layup with 11 seconds to go that would have tied it. But we’ve had to play Boardman [in the regional finals]. They were big that year.”

Humphrey thought Conneaut could have won the regional game had Fails been able to scout the opponent.

“Harry couldn’t scout them, so we depended a lot on the advice to a lot of people,” Humphrey said. “They told us we couldn’t press them in the first half, and we were down by 16.

“We pressed them and came within two. If we got to overtime, I’m sure we could’ve beaten them.”

Humphrey scored 25

of Conneaut’s first 41 points of that contest and wound up with 29 to go with 12 rebounds.

He believes the Spartans of his era would still do well today.

“I think our teams would be as good as any today,” Humphrey said. “Tim Richards and Jeff Puffer would have been great 3-point shooters. I think we played good defense. It was a great team.”

In that season, Conneaut posted a 19-4 record, with two sectional championships and Ashtabula County’s first big-school district title since 1947. (Geneva won the small-school district tournament in 1950).

The Spartans averaged 69 points that year over their 23 games, scoring 107 points against Pymatuning Valley and 99 against Jefferson. For the second year in a row, they held NEC opponents to 49 points a contest and held Perry to 26 points and Girard to 30.

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# RAEVOURI: Conneaut graduate to be inducted into ACBF Hall of Fame

FROM PAGE B4

Another interesting story is that my coach on the all-post basketball team there in Korea was a young, freshly-minted army captain by the name of Mike Krzyzewski. I knew he was a good coach at the time, but couldn't predict how great Coach K would eventually become. He is now the winningest college coach in history. I enjoyed playing under his tutelage.

After my honorable discharge in 1976, I returned to Conneaut for a while and played on a team sponsored by McVoy Electric that

included the likes of Joe Sedmak, Roger Andes, Scott Humphrey, Tim Richards, and Jeff Puffer. We played in a local county tournament. I really enjoyed teaming up with these great Conneaut athletes.

I was struggling to find a direction in Conneaut at that time, however. Adventure called and I moved to California. I got into the radio business there as an announcer at KRKC in King City, and then KNJO in Thousand Oaks. I had gotten promoted to the promised land in Los Angeles, when I decided to change careers. I finally saw that broadcasting wasn't really for me. I

went back to school at Cal State Northridge and got my multiple-subject teaching credential.

I ended up teaching fifth grade for three years, middle school for six years and 17 years at Valencia High School, where I was a math teacher. I became the girls golf coach when the program started in 1997 until I retired in 2013. I never became a great golfer but loved the game. One notable player who participated in our program was Alison Lee, who is now on the LPGA Tour. I'm definitely one of her fans!

Life has been good, and retirement here in

my tropical garden in Hawaii with my wife Anni is a blessing.

Anni and I have one daughter, Sophia, who lives in Ridgefield, WA. She gave us one grandson, Luke, who is now almost 5 years old.

I retired to Hawaii where I keep busy in my tropical garden.

Being voted into the Hall of Fame is definitely the cherry on top of my cake. It's a badge of honor that I wear with pride.

Thanks to all who dredged this old timer out of the way-back machine.

It's great to be a part if Ashtabula County Basketball history.

# ACBF Player of the Year candidates

## Conneaut



Loomis



Farley

## Edgewood



Ernst



McCollister

## Geneva

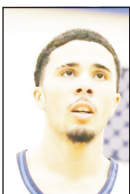


Smith



Marrison

## Grand Valley



Arrington



Hart

## Jefferson



DeGeorge



Contenza

## Lakeside



DiSalvatore



Torrance

## Pymatuning Valley



Neczeporenko



DeMoss

## Saint John



Narducci



Cevera

# The 2023-24 basketball season provided many memories. Here are photos from Warren Dillaway



Jefferson's Joe DeGeorge (22) celebrates with a fan after defeating Cleveland Benedictine for a Division II sectional championship in the 2023-24 season.



Edgewood's Carly Kray, facing, hugs teammate Faith Vencill winning a Division II girls basketball sectional championship.



Geneva's Brooke Richmond, left, and Isabella Ferrante, right, battle for the ball with Edgewood's Katie McCollister during a 2023-24 girls basketball game.



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