



The Alumni Link

A publication of the Sebring McKinley High School Alumni Association
P.O. Box 141, Sebring, Ohio 44672-0141



DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI INDUCTEES SELECTED

Three distinguished gentlemen—all of them nationally known—have been named as recipients of the 2026 Distinguished Alumni awards.

Richard “Dick” Hitchcock of the class of 1953 is being inducted for his outstanding work in the field of logistics. According to his nominator **Frank Barrett ’82**, “Dick has been at the core of logistics in Columbus for more than 60 years and has trained many logistics professionals.” In that time, he has held management positions with several major freight carriers including “People’s Cartage; Retail Merchants and Walker Trucking; division sales manager at Consolidated Freightways; vice president of national accounts at Duff Truck Line; director of corporate accounts at Super Transport; director of business development at USF Distribution; and director of corporate accounts at BNSF Logistics.”

Dick recently received the honor of becoming the first inductee for the Columbus Logistics Hall of Fame. A 1957 graduate of The Ohio State University, Dick was recognized for his collaborative efforts, mentorship of students and logistics employees, customer service and innovative ideas in his nearly 60-year logistics career.

John Beckett from the class of 1968 will be inducted posthumously. He was nominated by his sister **Rhonda Beckett Edgerton ’82**. John became a recognized and respected journalist as a newspaper, radio, and sports reporter, as well as a youth baseball and soccer coach in Brighton, Michigan.

John returned to Michigan and made the transition to print news when he joined the staff of the Brighton Argus in the early seventies, covering a wide variety of subjects. He then joined the staff of the Ann Arbor News first as a copy editor, then as an award-winning reporter on a team of writers covering both Michigan football and basketball, as well as other news content. He began his career as an announcer at radio station WHMI in Howell, Michigan, and then returned to Sebring briefly to work at WFAH in Alliance. Over his years of writing for the Ann Arbor News, Beckett won several statewide and national AP reporting awards.

In 1990 John had a book, “Mission Accomplished,” published, sharing the behind-the-scenes tale of the storybook ending of the championship of the 1989 Wolverines basketball team. In the foreword to the book, Michigan’s legendary coach (and then athletic director), Bo Schembechler said, “Beckett had plenty of insight and inside views from the important regular season match ups to the exciting NCAA and national championship. He recounted the compelling story of the personalities, the character, and the “never-say-die” determination of the players in a captivating and thrilling story.”

The third inductee is **John Bacon from the class of 2002**. John made his debut as a Major League umpire in 2019 as a second base umpire in a game between the Cincinnati Reds and the New York Mets. Prior to that he worked in the minor leagues such as the Gulf Coast League and the Appalachian League after graduating from the Jim Evans Academy of Professional Umpiring.

Since 2019 John has continued his professional career by working with crews of umpires in many cities all over the United States, including Cleveland. Many of his friends and relatives travel to the games where he is an umpire. In addition, he has appeared on numerous nationally televised MLB games. Currently, he is working as an umpire for spring training teams.

Complete biographies of the inductees will appear in the October issue of the Alumni Link.

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI BOARD NOW ON DISPLAY

The new Distinguished Alumni board is now displayed on the wall outside the SHS auditorium. The brainchild of Theresa Kuniewicz Ferlotti '80, the display board replaces the plaques that were hanging there and showing age from being moved frequently for the Alumni brunch. The plaques will still be on display at the annual brunch.

Carver Printing of Sebring created the purple board for the association. Theresa gathered the information for all the alumni and is currently in the process of creating a booklet with additional information on each Distinguished Alumni honoree. Thank you, Theresa, for proposing the board and seeing it through!

ANNUAL BRUNCH SET FOR APRIL 25

Mark your calendars for the annual **Alumni Brunch to be held on Saturday, April 25 at Harvesting Hope** located at 230 S. 12th Street in Sebring.

The event will begin with socializing from 10-11 a.m., followed by a delicious brunch at 11. The highlight of the brunch will be the introduction of this year's Distinguished Alumni recipients (see related story). We will also have our annual business meeting with the election of officers while we recognize the 50-year class of 1976 and the 25-year class of 2001. In addition, vice-president Trista Evanitcka Bates will recognize all classes who are represented at the banquet.

Alumni and friends can make reservations using the form in this newsletter. The cost is \$22 per person. The deadline for reservations is April 19.

We will also announce the winner of the auction of the Lake Park Market painting donated by Jim Seffens '72, who is also a Distinguished Alumnus. The proceeds from the painting will be split between the Alumni Association and the Sebring Historical Society. The top bid is currently \$500 by Cindy Dalton '71. Bids can be made online on the Facebook pages of either organization, or they can be sent by text or mail to JoAnn Jones or Susan Sanor. Bids must be in increments of at least \$25 and will end on April 20.

In addition, we will have our annual 50/50 raffle. Tickets are available at the brunch but can also be purchased by contacting president JoAnn Jones prior to the brunch. Tickets are \$1 each or six for \$5. All proceeds go to the scholarship fund.

BRUNCH RESERVATION FORM

Saturday, April 25th • Doors open at 10 a.m. • Brunch at 11 a.m.

Name(s) and year(s) of graduation:

To receive confirmation of your reservation of your reservation, please include a phone number or email address here: _____

Please enclose \$22 per person. Amount enclosed: _____

Checks payable to SHS Alumni Association

Mail to: P.O. Box 141, Sebring, OH 44672

To pay electronically, send to vice-president Trista Evanitcka Bates:

Venmo::@Trista-Bates

PayPal::@TristaBates

CashApp::\$ThatsJustTrista

ALUMNI NEWS

Jenna Woods Dziadkowicz '18, who has a passion for fashion and entrepreneurship, has built her own retail brand called Blooming Beautifully Boutique. She now operates both online and in a brick-and-mortar storefront. Jenna began shipping orders all over the United States in 2023, and in Nov. 2024 she opened a store in the Mount Union Gateway Plaza in Alliance. Blooming Beautifully Boutique offers women's clothing, accessories, shoes, and small gift items. Beyond fashion, Jenna's mission is centered on spreading positivity and raising awareness for mental health. She donates a portion of sales each year to the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

Trista Evanitcka Bates '04 has been named the new postmaster at the Sebring post office. Trista has worked for the U.S. Postal Service for 15 years as a postal support employee, a carrier, and a postmaster, most recently in North Lima.

Jon Walker '91 has been appointed to fill a vacancy on Sebring Village Council. He joins SHS alums **Samantha Kerns Phillips '04**, **Marvin Aberegg '85**, **Steve Smith '82**, and **Rob Rouse '90** on council.

Coaches **Maggie Householder Skelton '11** and **Jorri Zmuda '11** led Sebring B.L. Miller's fifth and sixth grade girls' teams to the Mahoning Valley Athletic Conference finals recently. The team defeated number one seed LaBreae as they played three back-to-back games on Jan. 31 to get to the conference championship on Feb. 1. The team ended up as MVAC runner-up.

Adam Brown '15 was selected to serve on the Sebring Athletic Hall of Fame committee in September. He joins many other alumni serving on the committee: co-chair **Geoff Jurica '75**, co-chair and secretary **JoAnn Warren Jones '72**, **Trista Evanitcka Bates '04**, **Kyle Billingsley '91**, **Drew Brunie '75**, **Debbie Augustein Green '86**, **Ray Poorbaugh '92**, **Judy Ward Warrick '95**, and **Jack Weber '91**.

Chris Bostwick '11, a 2014 graduate of the University of Northwestern Ohio that is known for its automotive and diesel mechanics programs, has opened Electrified Auto Repair LLC in Alliance. The business specializes in Ford, Lincoln, and Tesla models but services all models. The Facebook page for his business allows customers to schedule online. It also says that a customer gets dealer quality service for independent prices.

Cassy Kimball Wynn '05, the cheerleading coach for SHS, led the varsity cheer team to a runner-up award at state competition for OASSA at Big Walnut High School in Sunbury on Feb. 21. The team and its mascot Troy placed second in the Gameday Building competition, which Cassy said is a new, popular category that "promotes fan engagement, energy, and sideline."

The SHS class of 1976 will celebrate its 50th reunion on Saturday, Sept. 26. The committee is asking classmates to save the date. More details will be sent out later.



CATCHING UP WITH . . . DISTINGUISHED ALUMNA, KIMBERLEE KOVACH, ESQ.

With her law degree in hand and a job offer in Texas, Kimberlee Kovach, in the summer of 1980, hooked up a U-Haul to her car and headed for Houston. But getting there took more than travelling the scenic highways to her southwest destination. Sitting by her side were family members giving her their blessings, friends always at-the-ready with encouraging words, an innate sense of adventure, and small-town grit honed from growing up in Sebring, Ohio.

Many readers will remember that generations ago, Sebring had three grocery stores. One, the Sebring Market on South 15th Street, was owned and operated by Mike and Mary Kovach, parents to Kim and her sister, Karol. The family lived above the store and everyone worked there.

In addition to selling groceries and attending school, our featured Distinguished Alumna played with good friends to this day, Susan Brubaker Jackson and Karen Nichols Rarick. In fact, the three were the first female crossing guards for F.A. Sebring Elementary, after Kim mentioned to Miss Jones that girls could do that, too! Summers were spent at Southside Playground and Benner's Pool. Winters included ice skating at Southside. Later, Kim sometimes joined in what she termed 'shenanigans' with Susan, Pat Brunt Poyser, Chris Applegate Cochran, and Shelly Benning Eells. "We still try to continue the tradition of silliness to this day!" Kim said with a laugh.

A member of the Sebring McKinley High School graduating Class of 1973, Kim attended Ohio State University. (She was quick to add the school was minus the coveted "The" at that time.) The bachelor's program she chose was psychology because, she said, "I always loved people." Law school at Capital University came next. "It was there," Kim said, "that I found a way to merge my interest in psychology with my studies in law." A classmate told Kim about the mediation program through the law school, so she took part in that training while earning her Juris Doctorate.

Kim explained that mediation is a way to resolve conflicts between parties and reach settlements outside of the courtroom. "The idea of mediation as an alternative to the legal system was just beginning to percolate in a few locations in the country when I accepted the job offer in Houston from a judge who was looking to begin a program," Kim said. "Since accepting that offer, I have been very active in the practice."

With a skilled mediator's help, people at odds can often find closure and in many cases, repair broken relationships. "When that happens," Kim said, "I am most grateful for my field of work."

Along with holding mediations herself, Kim also spent three decades teaching law classes in ADR (alternative dispute resolution) and has written books and several law review articles on the topic. She's proud of her work and other mediators because now, as she shares, "The United States is a global leader in mediation."

A very unexpected and happy occurrence took place at a mediator conference when Kim met Eric Galton. The couple were married in 1994 and Kim moved to Austin, Texas. Kim has three stepsons and she and Eric have twin daughters. (See 2021 wedding photo with this story.)

Of course, the children are all adults now. But as mothers do, Kim reminisces, "When the twins were growing up, I became 'Dance Food Mom' for their high school dance team and learned quite quickly how to cook for 46 dancers and three directors!" The task was made a bit easier since Kim always loved to cook.

Another passion is travel, including international travel. "Seeing the world has been a focus since I was about 7-years-old reading through The World Book Encyclopedia," she remembers.

"I love every minute of traveling and I'm trying to get as many passport stamps as I can!" she said. (See photo of Kim arriving in New Zealand to celebrate her 70th birthday.)

Kovach continued on page 5....

Kovach continued from page 4....

Since she loves to travel, how about back in time? We ended our interview with this Distinguished Alumna by asking what she would say to her 16-year-old self about the future? Her advice was this: "Have a plan and keep focused, but always remember God and the Universe may have some modifications. Your path will unfold as it should."



ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME INDUCTS ATHLETE, CHEER SQUADS

One outstanding athlete and two state champion cheer squads were inducted into the Sebring Athletic Hall of Fame on Dec. 13 in the SHS gym.

Dakota Wagner '12 was inducted for football, while he also played basketball and baseball, earning a total of 11 varsity letters. In football he was named to the first team ITCL as a linebacker and was awarded first team All Northeastern Inland as a running back as well as Special Mention All-Ohio. Throughout the season he was a Player of the Week for the ITCL, the Alliance Review, and WFMJ Channel 21. He also made the Big 22 list for WKBN Channel 27. Dakota had 14 rushing touchdowns in addition to two punt return touchdowns. He amassed 1778 all-purpose yards over his career. As a linebacker he had 13 tackles for a loss, seven sacks, two fumble recoveries, and three interceptions. He also played in the Penn-Ohio game as a senior. In basketball he was named to the second team ITCL and honorable mention for NEO Inland District.

The **state champion cheerleader squads from 2010 and 2011** were also inducted this year following the induction of the 2006, 2007, and 2008 squads last year. All five teams were state champs in the Division IV mount category.

Members of the 2010 squad were Ciara Barnett, Kayla Davis, Brittany Fotheringham Gable, Erin Green Powell, Elaina Jurica, Courtney Maretich, Chasity Schuller Hubbs, Stevi Smith Heck, Angela Sutton, and Amy Trainer Edwards. The girls were coached by Nicole Herman Mathias and Lynette Slagle Brownlee, who also coached the 2011 squad.

Gable, Davis, Jurica, Hubbs, and Heck led the squad to a second consecutive state championship as Alissa Courtney Johnson, Siara Dalton, Julia Cunningham, Blakelyn Imler Light, Courtney Maretich, Kayla Moore-Wilt, Jaclyn Rinehart, and Abigail Skelton Jenkins joined the varsity squad.

The Hall of Fame committee takes nominations each year with a deadline of Sept. 1. The nomination form is available on the school website.

SUPER BOWL WINNERS SUPPORT THE ASSOCIATION

Three alumnae and a friend of the association were the winners on Super Bowl Sunday as each made a donation and won money on the Super Bowl board created by vice-president Trista Bates.

Leigh Carpenter Hurford '85, Patty Cook Butler '80, and Lisa Collen Gednetz '80 won the first three quarters respectively, all taking home \$100. Sebring mail carrier Tony Sirpilla had the correct numbers for the final score and was a \$200 winner.

The association scholarship fund was the big winner, however, as it gained \$500 toward the scholarships that will be presented to seniors in May at the Senior Assembly.

Sebring McKinley High School Distinguished Alumni

Inaugural Class

The Inductees of 1993

Robert Akenhead
Elva Boyer
Ilene Ramsayer Greene
Clinton Heacock
Mildred Howell
Dorothy Jones
Ralph Muerth
Don Schreckengost
Viktor Schreckengost
Rose Woods

The Inductees of 1994

Olive Pope Galvin
Dorothy Bailey
David Bailey
Esther Kuntzman Cardinal
John George Cardinal
Donald Eckelberry

The Inductees of 1995

Ralph W. Alvis
Charles E. Murphy
Estella Crewson McKee
Harry B. Crewson, Jr.
John W. K. Fahner

The Inductees of 1996

Clyde Brogan
James Akenhead
George Davies
Ronald Neafie
Kenneth Penrose

The Inductees of 1997

Ed Buehler
Glenn Johnson
Ed Johnston
William Smith
Dorothy Fairbanks Ailes

The Inductees of 1998

Arthur Moore
Ray Dorr
Paul Schreckengost, Sr.
Kenneth Earl Cardinal

The Inductees of 1999

Richard F. Myers
William Lindsay
Barbara McCune Jorgensen
Andrew Saffkow
Robert Beaver

The Inductees of 2000

Pauline Harris Johnson
Kimberlee K. Kovach
Kendall Thornsley

The Inductees of 2001

David Baker
Carol Applegate Kline

The Inductees of 2002

Lynn Daugherty Aragon
Sally Abney Stempinski
Ruth Youmans Gottschall
Robert McFerren

The Inductees of 2003

JoAnn Jones
Greg Johnston

The Inductees of 2004

Walter S. Crewson, Jr.
Gary D. Jordan
E. Wayne Speakman

The Inductee of 2005

Dave Scarpitti

The Inductees of 2006

Paul R. Schreckengost
Gerald R. Poorbaugh
Michael A. Conny
Dr. Tommie Rae Radd

The Inductees of 2007

John Thomas
James R. Cannell, Jr.

The Inductees of 2008

George A. Landis
Joel Domino

The Inductees of 2009

David Harp
Donald "Marlin" Watkins

The Inductees of 2010

David Beamer
Christine Weingart

The Inductees of 2011

Judith L. French
Scott C. Griffith
John Paul Schwartzhoff

The Inductees of 2012

Rev. Gladstone Brown
John W. Smith
Theresa Taylor Tolson

The Inductees of 2013

Raymond Crewson
Kathy Abmyer Myers

The Inductees of 2014

Carol Rinehart-Hepper
Janice Warren Fugate

The Inductees of 2015

James R. Cannell, Sr.
Kim Heck Stanley
Tammi Wisner Terry

The Inductee of 2016

Amy Courtney O'Grady

The Inductees of 2017

David G. Utley
Mary Kay Utley Andrews

The Inductees of 2018

Shawn Eckert
Nicholas Cardinal
CDR John W. White USN (Ret.)

The Inductees of 2019

J. Michael Pinkerton
Martha E. Thompson
Susan Runyon Risbeck Sanor
David Yaggi (Honorary Alumnus)

The Inductees of 2020-2021

Richard P. Harp
CW5 Bryan Snyder

The Inductees of 2022

Paula Elsass Wayt
Donald Craig Andrews

The Inductees of 2023

Deborah Baker Weibush
Jim Seffens
Sheryl L. Holt
Suzanne L. Holt

The Inductee of 2024

Tyler J. Jones MD, FACS

The Inductees of 2025

Janice Israel Haupt Allen
Kenneth Flowers, Jr.

The Inductees of 2026

John Bacon
John Beckett
Richard "Dick" Hitchcock

**Don't miss the deadline
for new Distinguished
Alumni nominations.**

**Send a letter of nomination
by Dec. 31 to
SHS Alumni Association
P.O. Box 141
Sebring, OH 44672**

Alumni Link | March 2026

SHS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION Trojans Helping Trojans Donation Form

Name _____ Graduation Year _____

Address _____

Email _____

Preferred Phone (Texts permissible?) _____

(Providing contact information gives us the opportunity to send you a personal thank you and acknowledges receipt of your TAX-DEDUCTIBLE donation.)

Here's my donation of \$ _____ made payable to SHS ALUMNI ASSN.

If you wish to give your donation "in honor of" or "in memory of" a person or persons, please note name(s) here:

Send your completed form with check or money order to:

SHS ALUMNI ASSN

P.O. Box 141

Sebring, OH 44672

To donate electronically, send your contribution to vice-president Trista Evanitcka Bates:

Venmo::@Trista-Bates

PayPal::@TristaBates

CashApp::\$ThatsJustTrista

Questions? Need more information about contributions? Please feel free to contact:

JoAnn Warren Jones at 330-428-1734 or joann1954@sbcglobal.net

Jennifer Muerth Ripley at 330-524-5584 or jenniferannripley@gmail.com

Sebring McKinley High School Alumni Association is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization (Tax ID # 34-1681950)

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING WHO DONATED FROM OCTOBER 2025 THROUGH JANUARY 2026:

Mary Borton Virden '54 and Cliff Virden

Joyce Welch Krahling '53

Terry Applegate '75

Dave '75 and Dianne Dearth for SHS Boys' Basketball

Sally Youmans Gednetz '75 IMO Tim Conner '75

Ron Neafie '51

Jodi Conner '71, Michele Conner '72, and Lori Conner Morris Barnhart '82 IMO Sandy "Nunie" Youmans Meyers '71

Lori Conner Morris Barnhart '82, Morgan Morris-Smith '02, Ryann Morris Rouse '08 IMO Greg Morris

Sam Youmans '70

Jennifer Muerth Ripley '70

JoAnn Warren Jones '72 IMO Lynn Cameron Sullivan '72

Dr. Tommie Radd '68

Susan Poorbaugh Valentino '68 IMO Mike Weitz '68

Doug Kilbreath '66 IMO Martha Kilbreath

Terry Applegate '75

Zono Detchon Howard '65

SHS Alumni Association
P.O. Box 141
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