



June 1st, 2024

Centennial

ALUMNI BANQUET &
HALL OF FAME
CEREMONY

ALUMNI BANQUET & HALL OF FAME PROGRAM

Introduction & Superintendent's Message Seth Ford

Foundation & Alumni Recognition Mark Bartholomew

Dinner Sparetime Lounge

Hall of Fame Introduction Jenny Wagner

1967 Founding School Boards Current Board Members

1984 Volleyball Team Jenny Wagner

Wendell Luebbe Jenny Wagner

Quentin Neujahr John Stineman

Closing Mark Bartholomew



INAUGURAL HALL OF FAME CLASS OF 2024

Centennial Founding School Board Members

1967 Beaver Crossing School Board Members

Paul Geis

Paul Geis was born in Beaver Crossing on May 7, 1923. In his younger years, he attended country school and later graduated from Beaver Crossing High School in 1939. He moved to work at the Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln and attended some University courses until he joined the military in February 1941. Paul was transferred to Pearl Harbor after boot camp and continued to serve throughout the remainder of World War II being stationed primarily in the South Pacific including Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. He was awarded 5 battle stars for his service. He transferred out of the Navy after the war but remained in the Naval Reserve until 1977. Paul was united in marriage to Betty Rhodes on January 15, 1949, and to this union, 8 children were born. He was appointed Postmaster at Beaver Crossing and continued to work for the postal service for 39 years as postmaster and route carrier. In 1963, he and his family moved to the farm where he was born.

Paul also loved to sing for church services, weddings, and funerals, as well as presenting a patriotic program of "Scenes Across America." He also enjoyed being a member of the Goehner Melodrama for 11 years. Paul was active with the Volunteer Fire Department and Home State Bank Board. He served in all offices of the Beaver Crossing American Legion as well as being involved with the Beaver Crossing Development Corporation and Restaurant Board.

The reason he is being honored today was always a large sense of pride for him. He always believed in and worked toward a high quality of education for his community. From the time of being on the school board at Beaver Crossing High School, serving as President of the reorganization to form the new Centennial School District, being a member of the Educational Service Unit #6, to even being a bus driver at Centennial, he always had a great interest and participation in the educational system.

7 of Paul's children graduated from Centennial High School with one prior to the formation graduating from Beaver Crossing High School. Just among his children, there are three Associate Degrees, five Bachelor Degrees, four Master Degrees, and two Doctorate Degrees. This is a true tribute to a man who himself had a small amount of college credits but wanted the opportunity for his children and all children to be educated.

Marvin “PeeWee” Schulz

Marvin Schulz served on the Beaver Crossing School Board just prior to the 1967 consolidation and then was privileged to continue serving on the Centennial School Board for a number of years. He was born and has always lived in Seward County. After serving in the Coast Guard for two years after high school, he farmed with his family, which is now a Fifth Generation Farm, until his “retirement” a few years ago. His wife, Marilyn, worked in the Beaver Crossing School office, and three of his children, Jim, Gail, and Jeff, attended school in Beaver Crossing and later graduated from Centennial High School. After moving a mile down the road in the early '70s, his home was then in the Seward School District, and his youngest son, Jon, attended Seward School District after going for a couple of years to Beaver Crossing.

In addition to being a School Board Member, he was awarded the Seward County Community Service Award and offered his leadership skills to many other organizations serving as the American Legion District 12 Commander as well as American Legion 40 & 8, Beaver Crossing American Legion Post 178 Commander, and Goehner Grange Master. He was also a Board Member of the Blue Valley Coop, as well as a Member of Goehner Friedens United Church of Christ, Goehner Fire Department, a Founding Member of the Goehner Spaghetti Feed, Seward Kiwanis, Seward Crossmakers, and Seward County Veterans Committee. There was seldom an organization he joined where he did not end up in a leadership role.

Long hours on the farm and time spent attending all of his various meetings did not prevent him from enjoying a few key hobbies. He was a member of KiTones and an ongoing cast member of the Goehner Centennial Players. PeeWee and Marilyn enjoyed dancing and card clubs (don't play for money with him - especially cribbage) and his Seward Bowl and American Legion Bowling teams always did well, but his biggest passion was probably baseball. For 20+ years, he coached his sons and many others in the Goehner/Beaver Crossing area and when not coaching, he was always available to umpire a game.

PeeWee still lives in Seward and is more than likely recognized by almost any person that he runs into in the County, including the many times he has folded the flag for Seward County Veterans who have passed away. He always has a kind word and soft hello for anyone he meets. Thank you, PeeWee, for your service to our schools and our community.

Paul Luebbe

Paul Luebbe was a life-time resident of Seward County. He followed progressive farming practices, maintained a Grade A dairy operation, and was a contributor to his community in a number of ways, including his passion for quality schools. He served on both the Goehner and Beaver Crossing School Boards and was a proponent of the consolidation of the Beaver Crossing, Utica, and Waco Schools so that students could have a larger school with more offerings. Paul was proud of his community and worked his entire life to serve it.

Berle Noler

Berle Noler was an amazing man. He was born April 27, 1931 near Cordova, NE. He attended rural school, along with grade school and high school, in Beaver Crossing. He graduated in 1948 and then worked part-time at Christian Service Station where he later became part owner of the business. He married Carol (Sherry) Christian in 1951 and was blessed with three children, Becky, Kris, and Kelly, and nine grandchildren. He joined the U.S. Army and served as a mechanic in Korea for 15 months. After the war, he returned to work at Christian Service.

Berle was a member of the United Methodist Church of Beaver Crossing and served on several committees, both in the church and the community. He started work in 1959 with the U.S. Postal Service and was appointed Postmaster for Beaver Crossing in 1980. Berle was names Postmaster of the Year for the State of Nebraska in 1987 and continued his work until 1990 marking 31 years of service. He held numerous jobs with the Gideons, American Legion, NE Jail Ministry, and the Beaver Crossing School Board. He was named "Grandpa Pal" by his grandson, Mark Bartholomew which was carried on with all of his grandchildren. His Christian walk was his life. Berle Noler was a Godly man; a man who loved and lived for Jesus Christ.

Lyle Henke

Lyle V. Henke was born in 1921 to Orin and Clara Henke of rural Beaver Crossing. He was a 1938 graduate of Beaver Crossing High School. Lyle was united in marriage to Lorayne Pierce in 1942 and served in the 8th Army Air Force in England during World War II. Upon discharge, he farmed in Seward County until retirement. Lyle and Lorayne raised three sons, and he was a member of American Legion 40 & 8 and the American Legion Post #178. Lyle also served on Leland Cemetery Board, Farmers Coop, Home State Bank, and Beaver Crossing School Board. Lyle passed away in September of 2010.

Ray Gard

Ray Gard lived on a farm west of Beaver Crossing and attended school at Rural District 62. He graduated from Beaver Crossing High School in 1949 and the University of Nebraska in 1953. He served in the U.S. Army for two years, including sixteen months in Germany. After discharge from the Army, he taught a Veterans' Ag Class at Friend for a year and a half and then started farming in 1957. He married his wife, Wilma, in 1965, and they were blessed with three children, Aaron, Jennie, and Alan, all who graduated from Centennial High School. Ray was elected to the Beaver Crossing School Board in 1966 and served until the merger with Utica and Waco.



1967 Utica School Board Members

Harold Busch

Harold Busch was a longtime resident of Utica and owned Busch Lumber Company for over 30 years. He was married to Mildred Harvey and was the father to daughters Sherry Miller and Judy Naber. Harold was an active member of First Presbyterian Church in Utica. Also important to Harold was supporting the community in various volunteer capacities. Harold was a member of the Utica Public School Board for many years.

Deryl Simonsen

Deryl Simonsen was born on the family farm near Beaver Crossing on April 3, 1923. He grew up going to country school south of Utica and then graduated from Utica High School in 1939. He married Geraldine Salak in 1942. They had two daughters, Jane Simonsen Winkelman and Dee Simonsen Stucker both of whom graduated from Utica High School. During World War II, he spent two years in the Army Air Forces. Following his military service, he farmed near Wilber, NE and then south of Utica. In 1959, they moved into Utica, and he began working for the Seward County ASCS Office. He was the ASCS Office Manager when he passed away in 1974. He enjoyed being on the Utica School Board, and both his daughters can remember the discussions and the activities surrounding the formation of Centennial Public School.

Charles “Jim” Geiger

Charles “Jim” Geiger lived all but 12 of his 76 years on farm ground near the border of the Utica and Beaver Crossing school districts. In 1935, he left school after 8th grade to help support his family through the Great Depression. Although his formal education ended, he never stopped learning. He read constantly and studied advances in agriculture and water conservation. It wasn't uncommon for his daughter's school books to be his bedtime reading material, and they would find their textbooks beside his recliner in the morning. Jim and Doris, his wife of 52 years, had four daughters. Two daughters graduated from Utica Public School: Joann ('65) and Linda ('67) and two graduated from Centennial: Bonnie ('71) and Marcia ('77). Jim served on the Utica School Board from 1966-1968. From that service, he recalled his proudest accomplishments were a role in the consolidation of the three districts and hiring Arvon Engel as a Science Teacher for Centennial.

Frank Vrbka

Frank Vrbka served on the School Board from 1957 to 1970, serving both Utica Public Schools and Centennial Public Schools. He was an advocate for good education and good schools. He was instrumental in the consolidation of the area schools which became Centennial. He and the other board members spent many hours meeting and going to the area towns meeting with the people explaining plans and the benefits of consolidation. He was an area farmer all his life. He had five children; two who graduated from Utica High School and three who graduated from Centennial High School.

William “Bill” Lehr

William Lehr was born and raised in Waco, NE in the early part of the 1920s. Early in his childhood, his family moved near Garland, NE where he attended the Middle Creek Church and school. Even at a young age, Bill saw the value in a quality education and even learned to speak fluent German in that small country school - a skill that would prove valuable to him later. Bill married Norma Fuehring in 1941, a loving commitment that would last a lifetime. Soon after, he joined the war effort and was shipped overseas, serving from 1942 to 1945, leaving behind his dear wife and unborn child.

Even as a young soldier, Bill stood out among the others. He was approached by General Bradley who checked on his well-being and whether his company had enough straw for their foxholes. Later, while stationed in Ireland, Bill was honored to meet briefly with General Patton. Eventually, he was ordered to Normandy Beach and survived the Battle of the Bulge. Later, Bill was chosen, among the nearly 500 soldiers in his unit, to accompany wounded soldiers returning home on the Queen Mary. His commanders knew Bill was the perfect man to meet with and raise the spirits of these men returning home to lives he knew would never be the same.

After the war, he was reunited with his wife and now two-year-old daughter. Bill moved his family to a farm near Utica, NE, and almost immediately immersed himself in local education. While on the farm, he served 19 years as a District 42 School Board Member. Bill also served on the St. Paul’s Lutheran School Board and later the board for Utica Public Schools. During his time on the Utica School Board, Bill was an influential force in the consolidation and merger of the Utica, Beaver Crossing, and Waco Schools, which is now Centennial Public School. He never lost his interest in public education and impressed on his children its value for the future of their children.

Bill and Norma raised three daughters and one son in those years on their Utica farm. Although Bill passed away in 1989, all of his children still appreciate their father’s love of education and dedication to the community, as well as his fun-loving personality. One cannot think of the important history of those rural schools, and especially of Centennial Public School without remembering the hard work and humility of William Lehr.

Alan Rutledge

Alan Rutledge grew up on the family farm near Utica and graduated from Utica High School in 1945. After high school, he enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and then returned to Utica to farm with his father after fulfilling his military service. He retired from farming in 1990 and spent his days golfing and playing pool. He always enjoyed serving his community and in addition to being on the school board, he was a member of the United Methodist Church in Utica, the Utica American Legion Post #49, and the Utica Saddle Club. In addition, he was in both a bowling league and a couples golf league, and he loved flying his airplanes and could also be found reeling in a fish or two.



1967 Waco School Board Members

Melvin Ehlers

Melvin lived his entire life on the same farmstead, which was five miles north of Waco, where he graduated from Thayer High School. Joining Melvin in his farm was his wife Helen and three daughters: Lynette Naber, Mary Bereuter, and Wanda Hall. Lynette graduated from Waco High School. Mary attended one year at Waco before both Mary and Wanda graduated from Centennial High School. Melvin was on the Waco School Board during the planning and implementing of the consolidation of Centennial Public School.

Edgar Bulgrin

Edgar Bulgrin served on the Waco School Board from 1961 to 1967. He was a lifetime farmer in the Waco area and served on various boards in the community as well as St. John Lutheran Church and School in Waco. He and his wife, Esther Rehms, raised two sons and four daughters. Two daughters graduated from Centennial High School. When the Centennial School District was formed, there were more school board members from the three combined districts than positions, and he chose to end his service on the school board.

Arlin Gocke

Arlin "Geroge" Gocke was born on February 22, 1923 and was the youngest of fifteen children. To inject a little humor with his name, he would say that George Washington was born on HIS birthday. Arlin grew up on the family farm near Waco. He attended St. John Lutheran Parochial School, which had two schools; the North School and the South School to accommodate travel, and Arlin attended the South School. After graduating from the eighth grade, he stayed home and helped his dad. In 1943, during World War II, he joined the U.S. Army to help in the war effort. His tour took him through Austria, France, and Germany. He attained the Rank of Staff Sergeant and was decorated with the Bronze Star and Purple Heart. He married his sweetheart, Dorthy Naber, on August 5, 1945. Three children were born to this marriage; Douglas in 1947, Cheryl in 1950, and Deon in 1952.

Arlin farmed full-time from 1946 to 1973. He grew multiple crops and also raised cattle, hogs, and chickens. In 1973, Arlin and Dorthy moved to Utica, and Arlin went to work for the COOP. They were lifetime members of St. John Lutheran Church, and Arlin served on several boards at that church. He was a member of the Utica American Legion and served as Firing Squad Commander for funerals and special events. Arlin and Dorthy had two children and four of their six grandchildren graduate from Centennial High School. They were always interested in their children's and grandchildren's activities and attended many sports and other events wherever they occurred. In his free time, he bowled in two leagues, played some golf, was a St. Louis Cardinals and Kansas City Royals Fan, and enjoyed Husker Football, but best of all, he took the time to be a good role model. All of these board members possessed common sense, discipline, and a great desire to carry out the task that was presented to them. They would and should be proud of a job well done.

Walter Heine

Walter Heine was a life-long farmer in the Thayer area where he also raised cattle and hogs. Farming was his passion and hobby. He was the father of three sons, Larry, Ralph, and Virgil. In 1976, the children of Richard and Jnel Gruber, Debbie, Joyce, Janese, Ricky, and Vicky, joined the family due to the death of their parents. Walt attended parochial and public school in Thayer through his high school years. In 1941 and 1942, he was a member of the State Championship Basketball Teams. He would be honored to know that the photo of this team is displayed in the commons area of Centennial Public School.

During his adult life, he held a position on the Thayer School Board. While on the Thayer School Board, it was decided to merge with the Waco School District. After that merger, there was discussion on joining the Beaver Crossing, Utica, and the old Thayer-Waco Districts into one united district. The voters of these districts approved the merger, and the Centennial School District was formed. Walt was then appointed to the board of the newly consolidated school district. This joint board worked through the tough decisions that had to be made when unifying these communities into one school district and still maintain the three distinct towns. Decisions on where the school would be located and how the existing buildings would be utilized for the best of the district as a whole was also needed to be decided. The Gresham School District joined at a later date to fill in the northern part of the district. Thank you for honoring Walter; he would be truly proud of what the school has become.

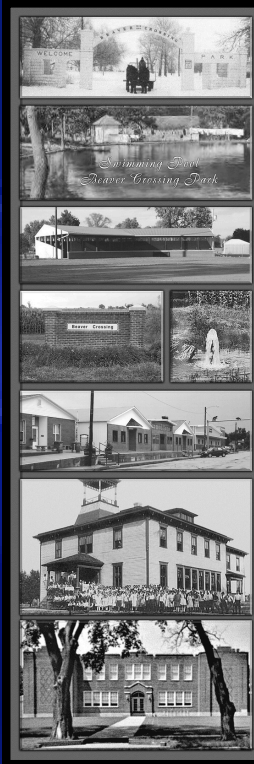
Loren Stuhr

Loren Stuhr was born in York, NE in 1936 and was the eleventh child of the Henry Stuhr family. His elementary education was at a country school and then four years at Waco High School. He attended Doane College in Crete, NE and in 1957, he married his high school sweetheart, Mary Jean Ellison, and then joined his brother in the family farm operation. Loren was elected to the Waco School Board as a junior and short-term member when planning and negotiations were in progress in the formation of the Centennial School District. In 1971, they moved their family of four children to Rising City, NE where he managed an insurance agency. In 1987, he taught insurance classes and joined the audit/loss control department of a regional insurance company. In 2002, he left the daily work force and enjoyed expanding the landscaping at their acreage in Rising City. Mary Jean and Loren now live in a retirement community in Lincoln, NE. He is honored to be included in tonight's Inaugural Hall of Fame Banquet. Loren wants to give a "shout out" to the Centennial School Foundation for sponsoring this event and to the school board members, both past and present, for their insight in making Centennial what it is today. To God be the Glory!

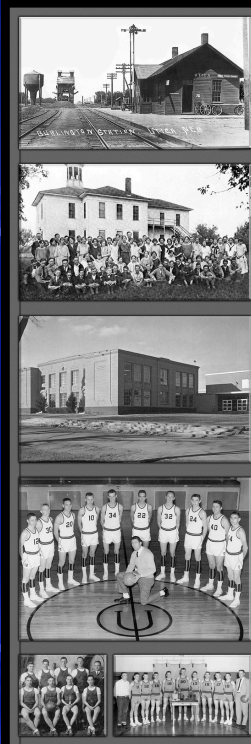
James Sullivan

James Sullivan has been a lifelong farmer. He and his wife Dona Sullivan lived in rural Waco, NE. They had three children who all graduated from Centennial High School; Gary Sullivan ('72), Kevin Sullivan ('78), and Kiley Sullivan ('82). Jim was one of the first people to start organizing the meetings to discuss the consolidation of the three schools. He served on the Waco School Board and the Centennial School Board from 1967-1970.

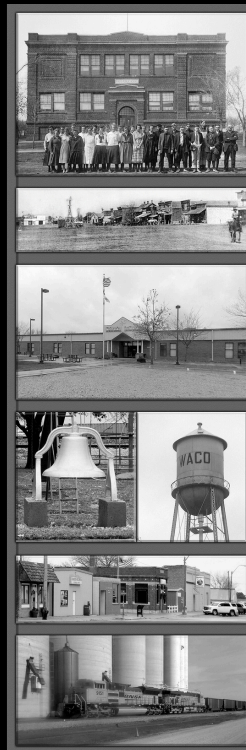
FOUNDING SCHOOL BOARDS



BEAVER CROSSING



UTICA



WACO

INAUGURAL HALL OF FAME CLASS OF 2024

1984 Volleyball Team

Class C-1 State Champions (24-0)

Head Coach - Phyllis Rice-Honnor

Coach Rice-Honnor's volleyball career began at good ole' Waco High as an athlete. She graduated from UNL and started her teaching/coaching career at Centennial for 30 years. In retirement, she officiated volleyball for about 10 years, and she continues to support Nebraska Volleyball and even gets back for some Centennial Volleyball, which has become harder now after she and Bill have moved to Lincoln.

Phyllis is a current board member for NHSSHOF. She was active with the Nebraska Coaches Association for many years as a board member and then became the first female President of the NCA. She felt we needed some females to stand up for the young ladies in sports, and she wanted to be a voice for all women's sports. She has been inducted into the NHSSHOF, the NHSACA Hall of Fame, and felt truly honored to have the NCA Volleyball Award named after her which is an award that recognizes volleyball coaches who are making significant contributions to high school volleyball. The athletes and assistant coaches from Centennial have all made these awards possible for her.

The '84 team was special, going undefeated and being crowned State Champs! Credit goes to Jan Buss, my assistant coach, the student managers, Penny, Michelle, and Lisa, and the dedication and hard-working athletes I had that made my job easier. This team was one of the first to use an I-4-2; now you rarely see this offense. The opponents knew we would set the ball to our two main hitters, Virginia and Cindy. Our setters were Brenda and Jana and our outside hitters were Reba, Lori, Amy, and Angie, and we couldn't of been successful without our strong bench of Kim, Stacy, Jacque, Lisa, Angie, and Lori. Each team member had to accept their role and carry out their responsibilities, and this real team effort is what made this team so successful. Phyllis has been honored and blessed to have taught and coached at Centennial and is truly grateful for so many great memories.

Assistant Coach - Janice Buss

Jan began her teaching and coaching career at Centennial in 1982. She coached volleyball through the 1986 season, and after her family was older, she continued to be involved by refereeing JH volleyball and eventually coached JH volleyball for a few years. She than began keeping scorebook for the varsity volleyball and continued that a couple years after retirement.

Reba Hirschfeld

Reba was a 1985 graduate, and her senior year of volleyball was an exceptionally fun year. She enjoyed it all...the bus rides, their creative “motivational items,” their fans, and the team bonding, however, she could’ve done without the wall sits! Phyllis and Jan were exceptional coaches that had a way of pushing us all to be our best and accept our role on the team. After graduation, she moved to Lincoln and earned an Associate of Applied Science Degree in Business Marketing from SCC and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from UNL. She currently lives in North Platte with her husband Michael and works at Sandhills State Bank as SVP of Compliance. Their son, Trevor, attends Northeast Community College.

Lisa Leif

Following high school, Lisa played two years of college volleyball. She enjoyed many years of playing indoor and sand volleyball. She also spent some time officiating college volleyball. She has been married to her husband, Marty, for 32 years and they have one daughter, Allie. She has been working as a Realtor for the last 34 years. Lately, she has been enjoying being a grandma to their one-year-old granddaughter, Finley. She gives many thanks to Coach Rice-Honnor who instilled the discipline and love for the game of volleyball.

Lori Shonka

Lori lives in Lincoln, NE, has been married for 33 years, and has three children, Taylor, Kaylee, and Macie, and Kaylee is currently a 4th grade teacher at Centennial. In her time, she has been a hairstylist, home daycare provider, and is currently a nanny. She has great volleyball memories from their intense practices. Through volleyball, she learned that hard work pays off and you’re responsible for your own actions. Coach Rice was a tough coach, but their hard work paid off, resulting in a State Championship!

Cindy Obermier

After graduating from Centennial High School in 1985, Cindy attended the University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK) and earned a degree in Education with a concentration in Business Education and K-12 PE. This laid the foundation for a great career in teaching and coaching. Over the past 33 years, with the last 28 dedicated to Papillion La Vista Community Schools, she has taught business and PE with her current assignment being middle school Computer Science and Computer Applications. During most of those 33 years, she has been a volleyball coach at the high school level and she is spending the last few years of her career coaching at the middle school level. During those high school years, she was lucky enough to be a part of six state championships and coached some players who became All-Americans in college. Cindy and her husband, Steve Joekel, a former Athletic Director, currently live in Omaha. They spend much of their free time attending sporting events, concerts, and traveling.

Virginia Stahr

Virginia graduated from the University of Nebraska in 1989 with a BA in Elementary Education and in 1990, she earned an M. ED in Curriculum and Instruction. She then worked as a teacher and coach at Boys Town High School. Virginia returned to school to become a Physical Therapist graduating in 1996, and she moved to Salt Lake City working at the University of Utah's Pain Management Center. She continued her PT career in Sheridan, WY while starting a family, and then moved to Rapid City and left the workforce to enjoy her four daughters and assist them in their formative years. From there, she moved to Cody, WY for 15 years to help her husband build an integrative healthcare clinic while having the honor of watching her daughters grow and learn. While in Cody, she coached volleyball for the Cody Fillies. In 2017, she moved back to Sheridan, WY and started an integrative healing business, and she coached volleyball for Big Horn and helped them win a State Championship! She also coached volleyball for Sheridan College and was an adjunct faculty member teaching in the Massage Therapy School. Currently, she lives back in Cody, WY while their youngest daughter finishes high school. She continues her work in the Healing Arts and just became certified to serve her community as a Death Doula. Life is Good! She is truly thankful and said it was a true honor to be a Lady Bronco! She wants to give a shout out to Coach Rice-Honor...she is one of the best she has ever worked with throughout her career!

Jacque Grantski

The 1984 team was certainly special. It was loaded with young women possessing incredible athletic talent and determination. But, without a doubt, it was masterful coaching that led to this team reaching its potential on the court. Phyllis was skilled at recognizing and developing the special strengths of each person and weaving it within the dynamics of the team. The 1984 volleyball season was so much fun and one of the best experiences of her life.

She graduated from Centennial in 1987 and went on to attend Nebraska Wesleyan University. After graduating from NWU, she moved to Kansas City where she still lives with her husband, Andrew, and their 21-year-old daughter, Maggie. Their 24-year-old son, Max, lives in Dallas, TX. She recently sold her business (predictive analytics software for large industrial assets), and she is enjoying retirement by playing way too much pickleball and traveling.

Amy Zimmer

Amy currently lives with her husband, Dalen, in York, NE, and they have a daughter - Emily, son - Loga, daughter-in-law - Maelyn, grandson - Malachi, and grandbaby #2 due any day. Amy graduated from UNL in 1989 and became a marketing rep for Nabisco, Nebco, and Behlen Mfg. She has also worked in schools and healthcare facilities, earning her COTA certification in 2021. Some of her greatest highlights from Centennial Volleyball are lifting weights to "Eye of the Tiger," having team meals at Coach Rice's house, and serving at the 1984 State Championship game.

Jana Eikenhorst

Jana graduated from Centennial in 1986. Our TEAM was one of a kind. We knew each other so well on the court, and we had so much fun. Her Barber Shop has a memorial wall, and this Championship team is always a great conversation. She is truly grateful for all the memories!

Kim Miller

Kim is a 1986 graduate of Centennial High School and was a junior on the State Championship team. Being a part of a team with so many talented athletes was an honor. In 1988, she moved to Joplin, MO which is where she has stayed with her husband of 35 years, Gary. They have three children, Melanie, Paden, and Grace, and five grandchildren, Kent (6), Amaya (5), Milo (5), Cameela (4), and Legend (2). Their oldest daughter and son-in-law are fostering a 15-year-old boy, Haven, so we consider him a bonus grandchild. They all live within 3- minutes from us which is a blessing, and they enjoy following their many activities. She is currently working at Leggett & Platt in the accounting department.

Lori Kile

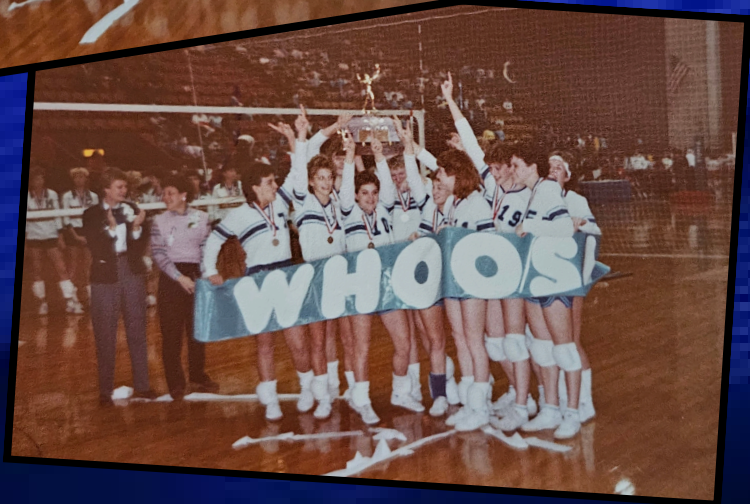
What a great experience it was, as a freshman, to be a part of this 1984 Undefeated State Championship Team! As a little girl, she fell in love with the sport of volleyball, and she still loves it today! Centennial always had strong teams, and she couldn't wait to get to play on that red and blue court! One of her most memorable memories of being a part of this team was practicing and playing alongside, then senior, Virginia Stahr. She took time to give me encouragement and support in the potential she saw in me. Coach Phyllis Rice also played a huge part in the development of players at Centennial. Lori moved after her freshman year and had several coaches throughout her volleyball career, but she considers Coach Rice to be one of the best coaches she ever had. This team had so much talent, but what clinched our success was the trust we had in each other on the court, enabling those girls to run like a well-oiled machine. This was a season she will never forget and is honored to have been a part of it!

Brenda Swanson

Brenda was a junior setter on this State Championship Team. This team was so fun, we all got along, knew what we wanted to accomplish that year, and we did it! She also got to be a member of the 1985 State Championship Volleyball Team, and then she went to a year of college at Kearney State. After that year, she went to cosmetology school. She then got married to Barry Gierhan in 1988, opened her own salon in 1990, and started driving bus for Centennial in 2001. She does the office work for the bus barn at Centennial, still does hair a couple day a week, and does the books for Gierhan Farms LLC. Barry and her have four kids and two grandkids with another due in August. In her free time, she loves to spend time with family, take care of her grandkids, going camping, and going on little vacations with her husband any chance they can get away!

Other Team Members: Angie Bulgrin, Stacy Peterson, Angie Volzke, Lisa Gierhan, Michelle Barth, Penny Conell

1984 STATE CHAMPIONS



INAUGURAL HALL OF FAME CLASS OF 2024

Wendell Luebbe

Centennial High School Class of 1982

Wendell Luebbe

Wendell attended St. John's Lutheran School near Waco from 1970-1978, and Centennial High School from 1978 to 1982 where he graduated in 1982 - He still has anxiety dreams of having tests with Mrs. Paxson for which he hasn't studied! In high school, he was too skinny to be Quentin Neujhar, but he liked to draw and drew caricatures of the faculty for his senior art project with Mrs. Houchin. He discovered a college catalog for the California Institute of the Arts in Donald Faye's guidance office. CalArts was the only place in the early '80s teaching character animation, so upon graduation, Wendell received a scholarship to CalArts, learned animation, then transferred to UNL and later to the University of Kansas to get a degree in design. He paid for his senior year at KU drawing Garfield cards for Hallmark, and played club volleyball - However, he wasn't as good as the 1984 Centennial volleyball team! Wendell returned to animation in California, art directing at Kroyer Films, Disney, and DreamWorks on Ferngully, A Goofy Movie, Road to El Dorado, and Peter Pan: Return to Never Land. In the 2000's he spent several years working in the tech startup business. Currently, he is remotely art directing Brad Bird's next movie Ray Gunn from Nebraska, along with trips to the production studio in Spain.



INAUGURAL HALL OF FAME CLASS OF 2024

Quentin Neujahr

Centennial High School Class of 1989

Quentin Neujahr

Quentin grew up on the family homestead south and west of tiny Surprise, Nebraska, population 46 with his parents Eldon and Emily Neujahr and his brothers Keven and Nathan and sister Jennifer. He attended Surprise Public Schools through sixth grade. Coach, Teacher, and Bus Driver Russ Krupicka, along with Mayor Ed Doehling, were the first strong influences in his life. Starting in seventh grade, his parents enrolled their children at St. Paul's Lutheran where Paul Heidorn the principal, and he would play football and basketball with the boys during recess.

Ironically, Quentin's first year at St. Paul's would also be the first year the students of St. Paul's would be invited to participate in sports along with the students at Centennial. Here is where Quentin learned the finer art of monkey roles from Stan Erks. Upon the completion of the football season, Coach Lloyd Slaymaker recommended to Quentin he try wrestling. Quentin's response was "What's wrestling?" Coach Slaymaker assured Quentin that it would make him a better football player. During those first wrestling seasons, Quentin didn't miss an opportunity to count the lights in every gymnasium.

In high school, Coach Stineman asked Quentin if he would be willing to change positions from tackle to center. When asked if he had a chance to play at tackle, Coach said no, but you might have a chance if you move to center. Not wanting to sit on the bench, Quentin made the move and played center the rest of his career. In wrestling, Quentin continued to count the gymnasium lights, but less and less each year until his senior season when he stopped counting the lights entirely. Quentin is the only wrestler listed on the 1986 Class C State Championship wrestling trophy to have a losing record. Two years later, in 1988, when Centennial won the Class C State Championship again, Travis Childers and Quentin marked the first time in Centennial's history to have two state wrestling champions in the same season. The following season, Mark Avery and Quentin became the second duo for Centennial Wrestling having two state champions in the same season.

After his first wrestling match his senior year, Quentin celebrated the win a little too much. The next day in the hallway, Mrs. Classen let him know in no uncertain terms, he needed to act appropriately, and he should act like he belonged. That first match of his senior year was a match between the eventual Class B and Class C state champions that following February. Quentin went from a 9-15 freshman to a 30-0 senior in wrestling. His teammates compiled a football win-loss record of 32-8, making the playoffs each season. Quentin attributes Centennial's success in football during this time to a group of hardworking guys who just wanted to win. Having athletes like Kevin Gierhan and the famous 8-man front in defense (Coach Classen's favorite) didn't hurt either. In wrestling, his teammates were state champion in 1986 and 1988, runner ups in 1987, and a third-place finish in 1989. The two individual state wrestling championship brackets hang in his office, still in the frames made by Jim Avery.

Quentin was given the opportunity to continue his football career at Kansas State as part of Bill Snyder's first recruiting class. A late offer was extended by Wyoming making Quentin's decision that much more difficult. Wyoming was back-to-back WAC champs and Kansas State held the longest losing streak in NCAA history at 27; it would end at 30. Kansas State at that time, was also the first team in history to lose 500 games. While pondering the offers between the two schools, Coach Wayne Heine helped solidify the decision to go to Kansas State by explaining the most important thing a man has in life is his word, and I had given my word to Kansas State before Wyoming extended an offer.

The decision to honor his word and attend Kansas State turned into 45 consecutive starts, starting every game during his college career. The teams Quentin played on at Kansas State from 1989-1993 finished with a 27-28-01 record. His college career ended with a 52-17 win over Wyoming in the 1993 Copper Bowl. That win was the first bowl victory in Kansas State history. The most satisfying individual accolade of his college career came after the 1993 season when he was voted unanimously first team All-Big 8 in the coaches' poll. Unanimous meant the Nebraska coaches voted for him too.

Quentin went undrafted in the 1994 NFL draft. He was invited to camp with the Los Angeles Raiders. Many of his college teammates said this was the equivalent of the Beverly Hillbillies moving to California after striking oil in Missouri. Quentin's career with the Raiders was short lived, and he was released with the first round of cuts in August. Quentin spent the fall of 1994 helping with harvest completely removed from football.

The day after Christmas, the Cleveland Browns put Quentin on their practice roster. He was invited to camp with the Browns in 1995. Quentin made the most of his second chance, by making the 53-man roster for the 1995 Cleveland Browns, the 1996 and 1997 Baltimore Ravens and the 1998, 1999 and 2000 Jacksonville Jaguars. Quentin's NFL career ended in 2001 after being released by the Denver Broncos. The very next day, Kathryn gave birth to their second child. While in labor, the television in the delivery room announced the players the Broncos released the day prior, and when Quentin's name was announced the nurses tried to look extra busy.

Quentin was blessed with an exorbitant amount of stubbornness and was reminded many times throughout his career he was not an athlete. He credits his success to learning the value of hard work, a desire to prove others wrong, and the unwavering support he received throughout his career from his family and the people from where he called home. While many of the opportunities given to him were not ideal or the opportunities he hoped for. Quentin reminded himself that he represented the kids from the small town. The drive to represent those small-town kids and those who influenced his life was the driving force that propelled Quentin into making a dream come true. Always remember that you can do anything you put your mind to.



Thank You

Thank you to the Centennial School Foundation, Centennial Public Schools, and First Bank of Utica for sponsoring this wonderful banquet for our Alumni & Hall of Fame Inductees. Congratulations to our Inaugural Centennial Hall of Fame Class of 2024 - you all truly make us proud to be a part of the Centennial story!



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