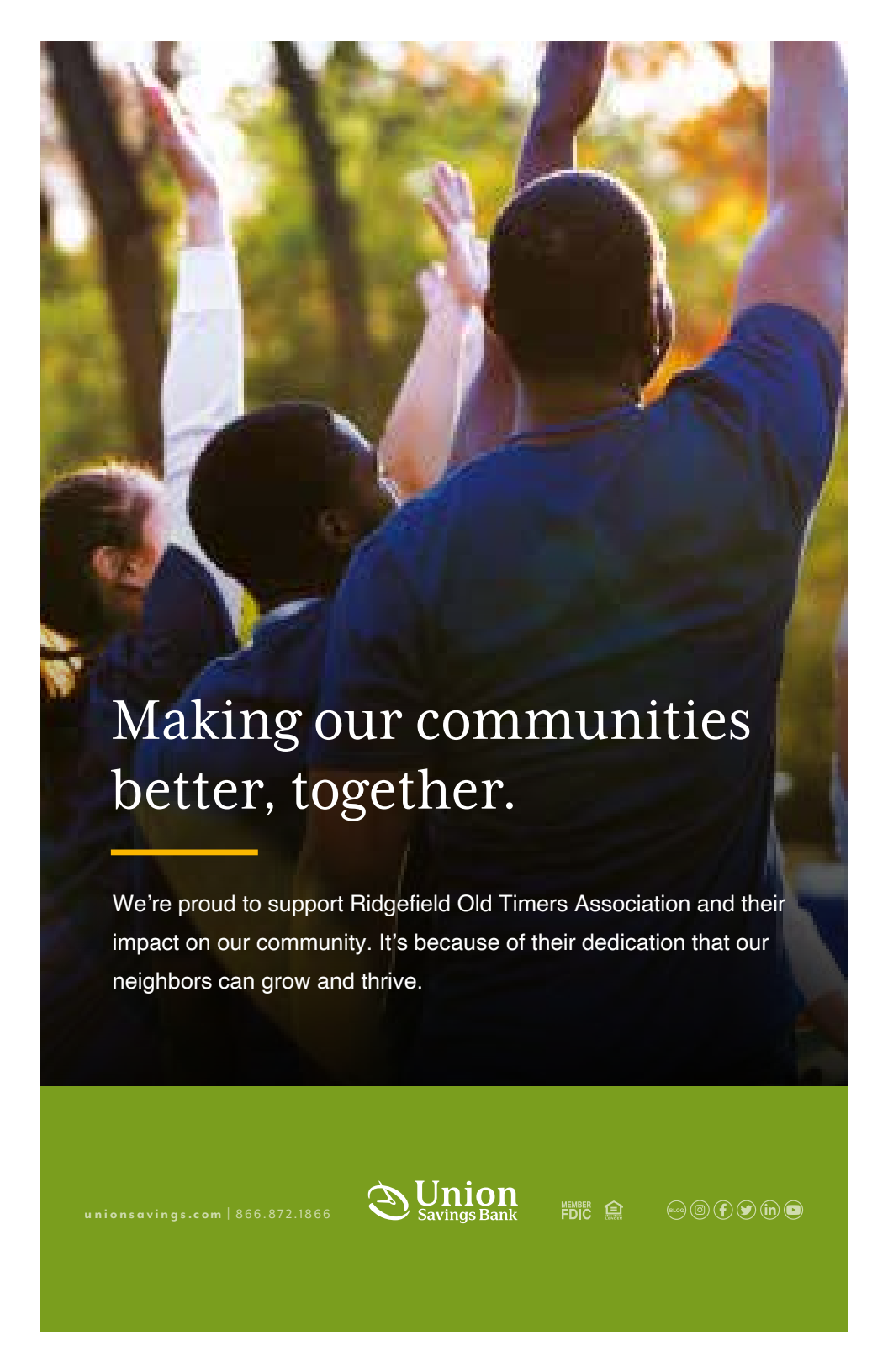


# RIDGEFIELD OLD TIMERS ASSOCIATION



32ND ANNUAL DINNER  
OCTOBER 18, 2025



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## A Message from Our Chairman

As the chairman of the Ridgefield Old Timers Association (ROTA), I would like to offer congratulations to tonight's five Ridgefield High School 2025 graduates: Rose Idone, Angelo Ciminiello, Jake Carney, Haley Gilland, and Hannah Gilland! Jake, Haley, and Hannah are receiving the George Hanlon Scholarship which began only two years ago in memory of George, who was a longtime ROTA chairman.

These (5) scholarships each year would not be possible without the support of so many people and local businesses over the past 32 years, and those that contributed to the Silent Auction, which has also been very helpful too. Please do what you can to help support ROTA.

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

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

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

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

— *Mark Lionetti, Chairman*



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# 32nd Annual Dinner Ridgefield Old Timers Dinner

Saturday, October 18, 2025

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## Who's in charge of the Old Timers?

**The Officers:** Mark Lionetti, Chairman; Trish LaRosa, Secretary;  
Dave Kiley, Vice Chairman; Manette Hutchings, Treasurer

**Awards Dinner Committee:** Mark Fitzgerald, Andree Fitzgerald, Trish Gernert,  
Terry Hughes, Gregg Hutchings, Manette Hutchings, Linda Hutchings, Dave Kiley,  
Trish LaRosa, Pete Nichols, Rich Pereria, John Pierandri, Darla Shaw, Ben Shaw

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Frank Lancaster Sr., Rudy Marconi, Andy Montanari Sr., Jay Montanari, John Pierandri,  
Mark Fitzgerald, Pete Nichols

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CIVIC AWARD
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## Barbara “Barb” Jennes

Few people in Ridgefield have been as active as Barb Jennes in bringing the arts into the community through various aspects of poetry. She has also dedicated her life to helping people with addictions use the arts as a positive outlet.

Born and raised in North Greenbush, N.Y. (across the Hudson from Albany), Barb always remembers writing poetry. She learned early on from her mother that poetry brought on strong emotional connections. Barb majored in English at SUNY Albany, went on to WCSU to get her master's and spent time at the Bread Loaf Writing Conference in Vermont.

After a marketing career with GE Credit, serving as a freelance copywriter and editor, and teaching in the Brookfield, Ct. School System, Barbara came to Ridgefield in 1999 with her husband, Chuck, and daughter, Mallory. She then began teaching English at East Ridge Middle School and was greatly loved by her students.

Now a well-established poet, Barb, has been published in such distinguished journals as; Comstock Review, Tupelo Quarterly, Night Heron Barks, Vassar Review, Frost Meadow Review, Tan River Poetry, Stone Cave, Anti-Heroin Chi, Ekphrastic Review, Writer's Digest, Naugatuck River Review, and Ct. River Journal. Barb has won numerous awards for her poetry and is able to write poetry for almost any occasion from "Bang the Can Poetry" to poems of alienation, abuse, and grief.

From 2020 to 2023 Barb served as Ridgefield's first Poet Laureate. She engaged the community weekly with poetry sessions for all ages, all abilities, and all interests. People learned to better understand poetry as well as write their own. No one can ever say they are not poets after attending one of Barb's sessions.

When asked what award she was most proud of, Barb mentioned the Nancy Comstock Andrews Award for dedication and enthusiastic advocacy, inspiration, and approval of the arts. This is one of Ridgefield's most prestigious awards decided upon by the Ridgefield Counsel of the Arts.

Barb is also very proud of her 2022 International Poetry Award for a Chap Book for her Blinded Bird's Poetry Book. Barb pours her heart out in this book about the three generations of addiction in her family. She has been part of many book signings and talks on this book and helped many through the raw, truthful struggles that she writes about.

When it comes to programs that Barb still provides the community as a volunteer, she mentions her continuing Poetry in the Garden at Keeler Tavern and her Poets from Four Corners. Poetry in the Garden was established in 2021 and is still going strong as is Poetry From the Four Corners Initiated in 2022. Barb is a real institution.

When it comes to being athletic, Barb says she would rather write poetry. She did not learn to swim until age 40 after she almost drowned. After that she assisted the synchronized swim team in New Canaan. There must be a poem in there somewhere.

For future goals, Barb is looking forward to the publication of her next poetry book which she has been working on for three years. She also wants to continue to be actively involved in Ridgefield's poet laureate program and spend time with her new grandchild. ■



The background of the entire image is a light gray marbled paper with swirling, organic patterns. A white rectangular box is centered on the page, containing the text.

# Congratulations to the Lewis's

Thank you, Bob and Gerri  
for all you do for the  
Town of Ridgefield.

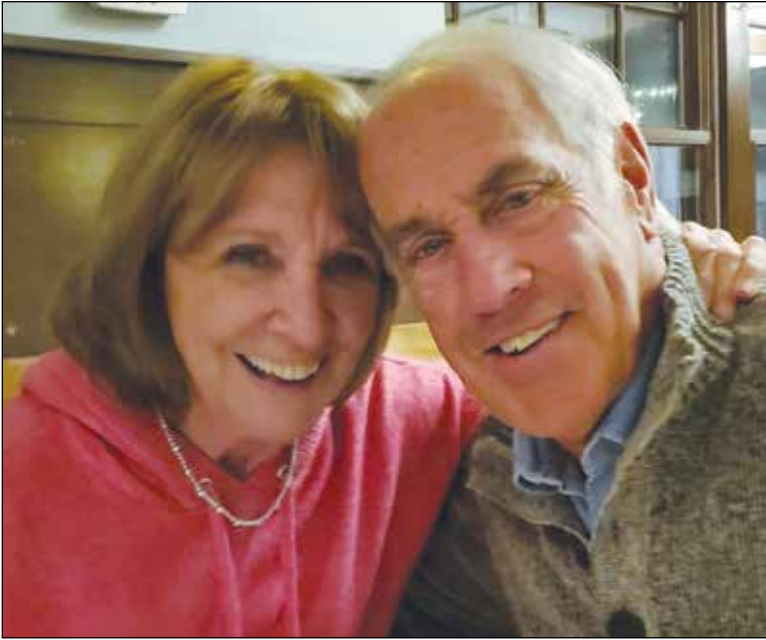
*Paul and Dewey McNamara*



ALL SEASON COMFORT

Congratulations  
Bob & Gerri Lewis.

Thank you, for all you do for Ridgefield.



CIVIC AWARD
-------------

## Gerri and Bob Lewis

Gerri and Bob Lewis were both Ridgefield High School graduates, (he a football player, she a cheerleader); they were married 55 years ago at the Congregational Church with a reception at the Lounsbury House; and later when they had their own three children, they returned to raise them in the hometown they love.

So, is it any wonder that they jump in whenever their town needs help? As members of CERT (Community Emergency Response Team), Gerri and Bob first began volunteering during major storms where residents were without power. From Hurricanes Irene and Sandy to Isaias, they became part of the Office of Emergency Management to get the town back on track. Once Ridgefield was in recovery after Sandy, they helped run a drive that took them to hard hit areas in Long Island to bring much needed supplies for relief.

During COVID, Bob worked as part of Ridgefield Responds and helped manage the disbursement of over half a million dollars in rental assistance to residents in need. As the Office of Emergency Management Public Information Officer, Gerri was responsible for identifying the roller coaster of information that would keep the community up to date and safe. She also served on the COVID Task Force whose major goal was to help businesses get back on their feet. Gerri and Bob worked with fellow CERT members to manage the operations of the Vaccination Clinic.

Bob, a graduate of the University of Colorado before serving two years in the U.S. Army, received his MBA from Boston University. He spent his entire 33-year career with GE Financial Services ultimately running one of the GE businesses for GE Capital. At the time of his retirement, he was President of GE Structured Finance, a global investor and lender in infrastructure projects and also a Vice President of GE.

Gerri, a graduate of the University of Connecticut, has spent her career as a freelance journalist, mostly writing about Ridgefield happenings. She currently writes for 068 Magazine. She is also the author of the Deadly Deadlines Mystery series about an obituary writer who solves murder in her hometown of Ridgefield, Connecticut. The second book in her series, Grave Words, was published in June. ■



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*Congratulations Bob & Gerri!*



POSTHUMOUS AWARD

## Joyce Flanagan

If any teacher left a strong legacy in the Ridgefield School System, it was Joyce Flanagan. She was an absolute dynamo who brought Ridgefield to new heights in music. People who had never heard of Ridgefield before heard of it now because of Joyce. So many accomplished musicians and singers were making a name for themselves due to her training.

Joyce was born in the Bronx and brought up in Westchester County, where she excelled as a musician and a superior athlete in field hockey, basketball, and softball. She went on to graduate from WCSU in 1978, where she was also a three-star athlete. Meeting her teacher, husband, Steve, at WCSU was another plus for Joyce, along with bringing up her beloved son, Kevin.



Joyce's teaching career started at the North Branford Middle School. However, after only one year, Joyce came to Ridgefield, first as the ERMS choral director and then the department head of music and instructor in all choral work, the orchestra, musical theater, and anything else music-related.

For her 36 years as the musical director for the Ridgefield School System, Joyce continually collected great accolades for the performances of her students. Whether her students were performing classical or pop renditions of music, they were outstanding. Respect for Joyce's

performances gave her students the chance to travel all up and down the Eastern seaboard and even to Disney World. As her recognition grew, she was also asked to perform with her students in Carnegie Hall, as well as in Canada, Ireland, England, Germany, Italy, and Austria. Her students became world travelers participating in festivals all over Europe.

The greatest passion for Joyce, however, was conducting and producing yearly major musicals for over 30 years. Everyone put them on their calendar immediately when one of her shows would open. The auditorium would always be packed, and there would be standing ovations. Joyce had the ability to spot talent in a student and nurture it. She built self-confidence in so many of her musicians and singers. Joyce was still working on a musical production when she passed, much too early.

When Joyce retired, she was not inactive. She was a good golfer, started an adult a cappella group called the Noteworthy, and gave concerts at the Greek Orthodox Church in Danbury.

Over the years, no one called Joyce by her real name. She was "Flan" to everyone. Her drive, her charisma, her energy, her knowledge base, and her work ethic was far beyond what was expected of a Ridgefield teacher. "Flan" was one of a kind and will be talked about for years to come because of all the students that she inspired. ■

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Winners!





SPECIAL AWARD

## Kelly Stackpole

Kelly Stackpole's first contact with horses was at age five and it was love at first sight. From the time she was a young girl Kelly has devoted her entire life to helping people and horses come together in community. Educating people about the treatment of animals and treatment of others is what Kelly is all about.

After graduating from Ridgefield High School in 1986, Kelly entered Western Connecticut State University as a pre-law major. Her interest in law wavered, however, and she went on instead to train horses and riders for competitions. Her first stable, Moonlight Farms, was in Redding, Connecticut.

After working in the competitive side of horse shows, and competitions, Kelly decided that was not the route she wanted to take. Instead, she began to take one horse at a time from New Holland, a slaughterhouse for retired horses. Kelly was now taking her life's mission from



competition to compassion. She knew in her heart that these were valuable horses who could still lead a comfortable life and bring healing to humans. Whether a person was special needs, had mental issues, or just loved horses, Kelly was able to put the two together effectively.

Kelly started with a handful of horses but today has over 30 rescue horses and a few other horses. Her new stable is on the Wilton/Ridgefield town line (previously the Firestone Estate) and is

known as Rising Starr Farms. This title is so appropriate as Kelly works with neglected, abused, and horses in adverse conditions, along with almost seventy volunteers to give these rescue animals a wonderful loving extended life. Horses stay with Kelly until the end of their lives.

The volunteers at Rising Starr help in so many ways. Some “in name only” adopt a horse and are there regularly to feed, groom and exercise the horse. Just sitting by a newly acquired horse and giving him/herself confidence to start a new life is meaningful. Kelly also uses volunteers in organizing fund raisers, serving as accountants, taking care of maintenance, and of course, mucking the stalls. Special volunteer programs for students and scouts are reading to horses, winter, spring and Halloween programs with a variety of activities related to horses, and internships.

For her outstanding contributions to the world of animal rescue, Kelly has received numerous awards, but that is not her goal. Her goal is to be able to save more horses. Just this year Kelly has added several new components to her ever-growing programs. She has purchased 154 acres in Virginia to bring veterans, first responders, and other military personnel support through linkage to her horses. This military link is very important to her. Kelly is now also taking retired racehorses from the Caribbean and Puerto Rico for rehabilitation and an attempt at a new life.

The Ridgefield Thrift Shop was the first organization in town to believe in Kelly and begin to help fund her program. She is so thankful for their support and hopes that other people will visit her Wilton/Ridgefield establishment on 93 Silver Spring Road to become friendly with her horses and see how well they are treated. She then hopes that this visit will show visitors the importance of her work and maybe help them to decide to possibly volunteer and/or donate. There are never too many volunteers when you are as civic minded as Kelly. ■

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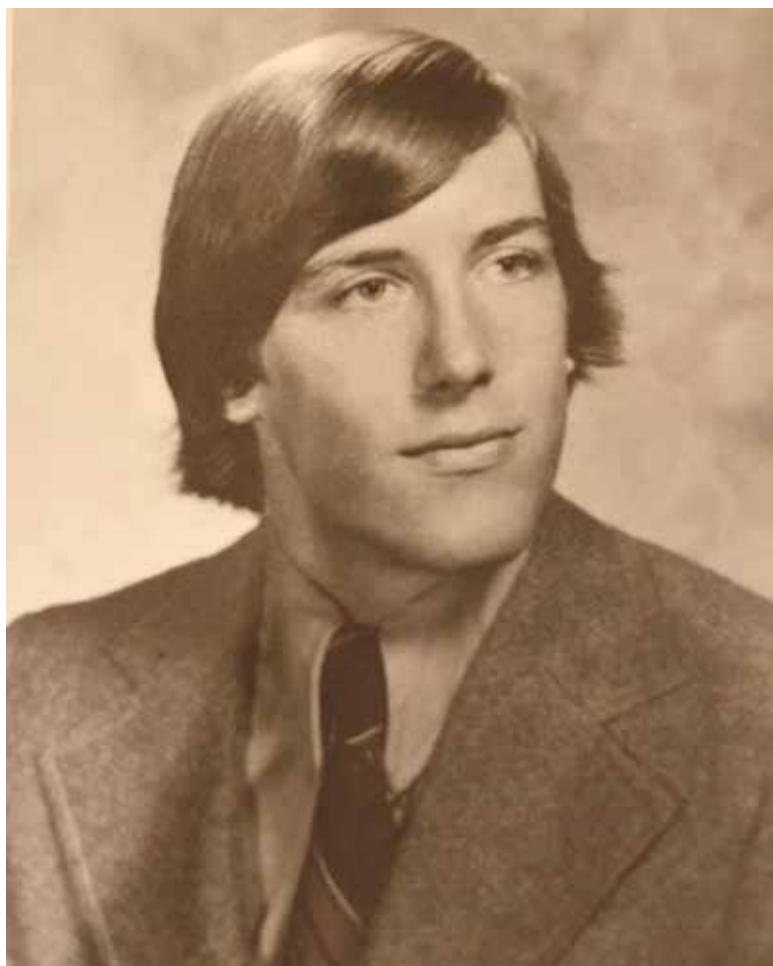


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**Lee W. Johnson**  
**RHS Class of 1973**

*The Johnson and Briody Families.*



POSTHUMOUS AWARD

## Lee Johnson

*RHS Class of 1973*

Born with his mother's competitive spirit and his father's humble nature, Lee Johnson excelled in three sports while at RHS – baseball, basketball and football – while maintaining good grades and helping to lead his teams. He was the Scholar-Athlete of his class in 1973. He did all of this with a remarkable sense of humility.

Lee enjoyed sports from a young age, playing on the St. Mary's boys' basketball team in the late 1960's, as well as playing on Ridgefield Little League teams (a proud member of his Pamby's majors team). He also enjoyed playing on basketball teams with the Ridgefield Boys Club. Lee's kind nature and dedication endeared him to his classmates, teammates and coaches.



*Lee Johnson sliding into home base.*

Picked by RHS Coaches in 1973 as one of the “Top Five RHS Athletes” - a recognition shared with classmates/teammates Tom Cesca, Craig Borders, Paul Natale and Chip Dean – the Ridgefield Press stated “Lee was always a symbol of leadership, good sportsmanship and ability to the underclassmen. He was one of the most respected students in school, both as an athlete and as a person.”

“The class of 1973,” this article continued, “survived a change that no other class had yet faced. In their sophomore year, RHS was still in the Western CT Conference, but all sports switched to the Fairfield County Conference (FCIAC) by their junior year. These athletes helped Ridgefield get on its feet in the FCIAC as RHS made a name for itself in the league.”

Lee was the only member of his RHS 1973 class that started his freshman year in three sports – football, basketball and baseball. He competed in each all four years of high school. During his four years at RHS, Lee played many athletic positions including fullback, halfback and quarterback in football; second baseman and third baseman in baseball; and guard in basketball highlighting his versatility as an athlete and competitor.

In 1973 Lee was named to the Danbury News-Times All-Fairfield Team in baseball and honorable mention on the FCIAC All-Star team, leading the Tigers in hitting. He was also the Knights of Columbus Athlete Awardee.

He graduated from Nichols College in 1977 and was a member of the Bison football team. He was an RHS Tiger fan all of his life and came to hundreds of games of all types of sport to support his nieces and nephews. In December 2023, Lee died at the age of 68 losing a battle to pancreatic cancer.

Lee’s family thanks ROTA for honoring his life and legacy today. ■



*Heidi Howkins looking out from sleeping port on the face of El Capitan in Yosemite National Park*

SPECIAL AWARD
---------------

## Heidi Howkins Lockwood

Heidi Howkins Lockwood is a Ridgefield native and member of the RHS Class of 1985. Her parents, Nan and Stu Howkins, were lured away from University of Chicago research positions by an offer from Schlumberger Doll Research in 1970. They moved first to Aspen Ledges Road in Ridgebury, and then, after the impromptu preschool that Nan started was too large for the house, they moved it to the site of “My” Nursery School, the red house on Farrar Lane, in 1976.

The 1970s-era Ridgefield Old Timers may remember Stu jogging to work, from Ridgebury to the center of town cycling, in an era when cars still stopped him to ask what was wrong and who he was running from. He completed the Boston Marathon in 1976.

The 1980s-era Ridgefield Old Timers may remember Stu cycling 20 miles to work in Brookfield, in all weather, with a car battery connected to 20 lights mounted on his bicycle in all directions. A Ridgefield Press article from that era called him a “Christmas tree on wheels” and urged drivers on Pope’s corner in Ridgebury to “believe their eyes” if they encountered him en route home after dark. He qualified for and then completed the Ironman Triathlon in Hawaii in 1988.



*Heidi on top of the summit of Karakoram Gasherbrum II. It's World's 13th highest mountain with a summit elevation of 8,035 m (26,362 ft.) above sea level.*

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The 1980s- and 1990s-era Ridgefield Old Timers will remember Nan rescuing the Town after the YMCA pulled out of Barlow Mountain. She assumed an enormous personal financial risk and took over the lease for one-half (10,000 square feet) of the building for a childcare center she called “The Children’s Corner.” Between 1970 and 2015, Nan provided childcare for more than 8,000 Ridgefield families. She wrote a book in 1994 on the art of offering flexible childcare to families with “New York City schedules.” There was a 3-year wait list for her preschool in the 1990s.

After studying at Wellesley College (1985-89) and MIT (1989-91), Heidi returned to Ridgefield to raise her family in 1998. She matriculated as a PhD student in Philosophy at Yale in 2003. She defended her dissertation in 2009 and is now a Professor of Philosophy at Southern Connecticut State University, specializing in the ethics of technology and AI. She has also been actively involved in the Title IX movement and serves as the Graduate Coordinator for the Women’s & Gender Studies Program at Southern.

Heidi spent the ten-year hiatus between MIT and Yale climbing in the Himalayas as a professional high-altitude climber with support from the National Geographic Expeditions Council. Her achievements during this period included leading alpine-style expeditions to Everest and K2 (on both the south side, in Pakistan, and the north side, in the Xinjiang



province of China); the publication of a book, *K2 One Woman's Quest for the Summit* (2001, National Geographic Books/Simon & Schuster); filming and climbing for documentaries aired on NBC, CNBC/National Geographic Explorer, and the National Geographic Channel; and completion of an international lecture and multimedia show tour for the Everest IMAX movie. Various outdoor equipment companies also sponsored her during this period, including Mountain Hardware, Leki, Gregory, Bolle, and PowerBar.

After a pandemic job transfer, Heidi and her husband Bill are raising their youngest child (age 14) in Norwich, Vermont. Heidi continues to serve as a professor at SCSU in New Haven and continues to think of Ridgefield as her hometown. ■



Congratulations to all the ROTA  
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#### ARTS AWARD

## James Fayette

James Fayette has the distinction of being Ridgefield's first male ballet dancer who has worked professional for his entire career with practically all the major dance companies in the United State. Not only being a principal dancer, but James is also a choreographer, coach, union organizer for the arts, company manager, and staging director. There is no aspect of the dance that James has not been involved in throughout his illustrious career.

Starting at age five with the well-known Patrica Schuster School of Ballet, James went on to graduate from Ridgefield High School in 1988 and St. Mary's College in California. James then received a full scholarship as a student at the American School for Ballet. Following that James became an apprentice for the Royal Dutch Ballet in Holland and later worked with ballet companies in Italy. James even performed for Mikhail Gorbocher in Russia.

James is so proud to have worked with such ballet greats as Martha Graham, Susan Stroman, Taylor Corbet, Peter Meirs, the Alvin Alley Company, Marce Cunningham and so many others.



James went to St. Mary's for elementary school and then on to high school. He remembers that Bob Marks allowed him to substitute six days of ballet a week for a physical education credit, along with an independent study project. For his independent project he demonstrated the history of ballet and later took the program into the NYC public school.

James's mother was from Spain and his father owned James of Ridgefield Hair Design on Main Street. Most of

James's family live today in Spain. James lives in North Carolina with his wife, principal dancer, Jennifer Ringer, and has two very talented children.

In 2005 James officially retired from the NY City Ballet as a principal dancer but has continued with his career at the college level, with various PBS TV specials and with consulting with those who look to him as a role model.

Ridgefield should be so proud to recognize James and his contribution to the arts that started in town at age 5. His accolades are so long I am not going to attempt to list any of them. James was certainly one of a kind that broke the glass ceiling for so many others. ■

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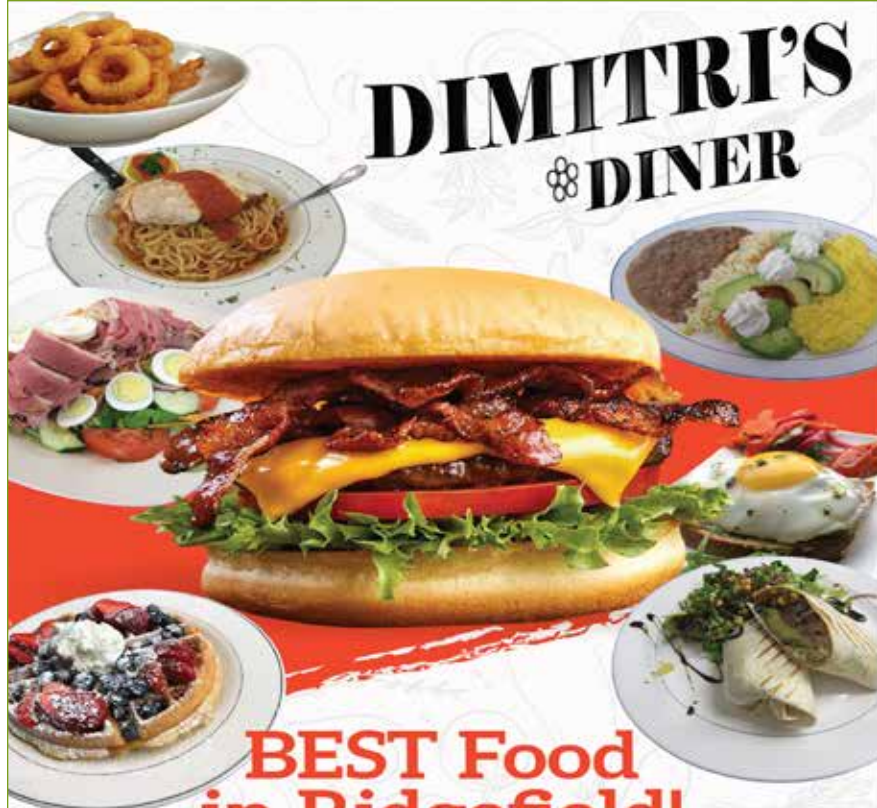
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A black and white photograph of three men in business suits standing in front of a bookshelf filled with law books. The man on the left is smiling, the man in the center is looking directly at the camera, and the man on the right is also smiling. The bookshelf behind them has many books, some of which have labels like 'CARTER, JEFFREY' and 'CARTER, JEFFREY' visible.

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# CONGRATULATIONS TO ROTA'S AWARD WINNERS



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## SPORTS AWARD

**Jacque (Jorgensen) Lang***From Ridgefield to Nationals*

Growing up in Ridgefield, Jacque's life has been a testament to dedication, community spirit, and a passion for both athletic and philanthropic pursuits. Her parents, Sandra and Erik, moved the family to Ridgefield in 1964, she and her two sisters, Jennifer and Janel, were raised in a family deeply rooted in the town. She attended Branchville Elementary, East Ridge Middle School, and graduated from Ridgefield High School (RHS) in 1985. While there was no RHS swim team during her time, her love for the water was already making waves.

Her swimming journey began at age six at the Wilton YMCA, leading to a decade-long career with the renowned Wilton Wahoos from 1975 to 1985. As a standout swimmer, she was a Junior Olympics qualifier and captained the team in her final year. Her time with the Wahoos was marked by numerous triumphs, including being part of numerous relays that set national records. The team's collective strength was evident in their back-to-back victories at the YMCA National Championships, where they were crowned Overall Team Champions in 1984 and Women's Champions in both 1983 and 1984.



This success continued at Brown University, where she competed on the women's swim team from 1985 to 1989. As a sprint freestyler, she helped the team secure Eastern Championships titles in 1986 and 1987 and was a key part of their Ivy League Championship wins in the same years. She capped off her collegiate career as a co-captain and a qualifier for the 1987 NCAA Championships.

Years later, she returned to the sport at the Masters YMCA Nationals

in 2008 and 2009, competing with her former Wahoo teammates. The reunion proved to be as successful as their youth careers, with them setting new national records in several relays and her individually winning two national championships.

After graduating from Brown, she embarked on a successful career in marketing, working for a marketing agency before moving on to Citibank and Nestle Waters. In 2001, she and her husband, Chris, moved back to Ridgefield, settling back into the community to raise her family. Her three children, Karen, Kate, and Chris, followed in their mother's footsteps, becoming accomplished varsity athletes at RHS.

Her return to Ridgefield also marked the beginning of a deep commitment to community service. She co-founded and co-chaired the Swim Across America event in Stamford, a fundraiser that has since raised over \$6 million for cancer research. Her dedication to the town is further demonstrated by her long list of volunteer roles, including serving on the boards of the Ridgefield Guild of Artists, Silver Spring Country Club, and Ridgefield A Better Chance. She is currently the Co-President of the Ridgefield A Better Chance board and has been a member of the Twin Ridge Homeowners Association board since 2007.

She has also served the Ridgefield school community as an academic advisor and was president of the RHS Booster Golf Club. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she was an integral part of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), helping local residents register for their vaccinations. Her volunteer work extends to delivering meals for Meals on Wheels, a small but important way she gives back to her community.



Beyond her impressive athletic and volunteer careers, she embraces a wide range of personal interests that reflect a life of balance and passion. An avid triathlete, she has competed in several Ridgefield Triathlons and completed a Half Ironman in 2024. Her love for the outdoors is complemented by creative pursuits like painting and Nantucket basket weaving.

Her life story—from her athletic achievements and professional career to her unwavering dedication to her community and diverse personal interests—is a remarkable example of a Ridgefield resident who has truly made a difference. ■



***Congratulations  
to all the Ridgefield  
Old Timer Honorees  
especially Jacque' Lang  
and Craig Hall!***

I am so thankful for the Ridgefield community and the fabulous friends we cherished while we lived here for over 30 years.

*With love, Sandra Jorgensen*



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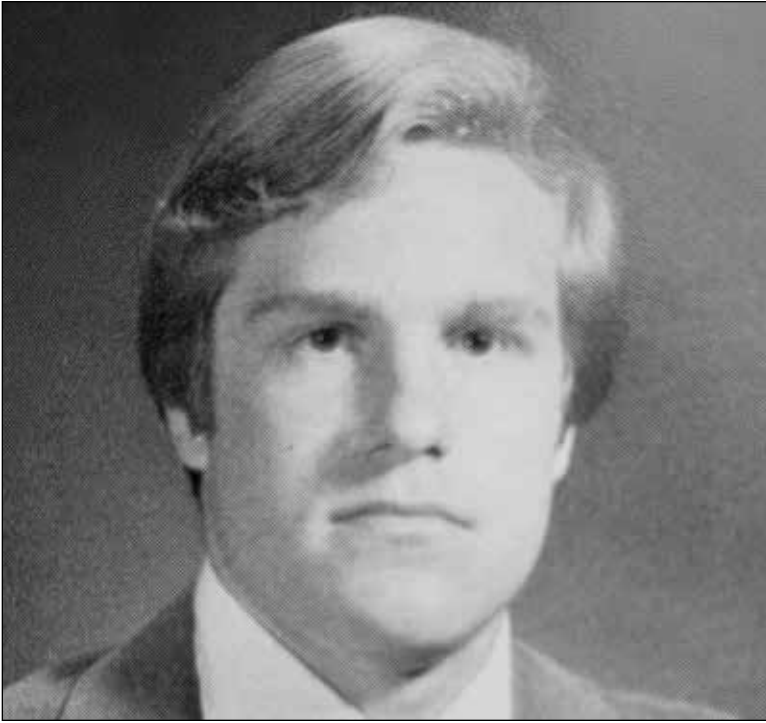
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SPORTS AWARD
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## Craig Hall

Craig is a 1983 Ridgefield High School graduate who is remembered for his all-around athletic ability. Voted Best Athlete by his classmates Craig earned seven varsity letters; three in lacrosse, three in football and one in track and field. Teammates and coaches important in Craig's athletic career were coach Ed Coviello in lacrosse and football, coach Medve in track and teammates Martin Carbone and Jim Ringers who played both lacrosse and football with Craig from juniors through high school. Craig's most impactful and influential mentor however was his brother Jed, a 1979 graduate. Jed was an incredible athlete and they competed in every single sport imaginable.



Craig captained both lacrosse and football his Senior season and was named to the North South High School Lacrosse All Star game. His lacrosse midfield line which included Carbone and Ringers was titled “the fastest line in the state” by then Wilton High School lacrosse coach. Craig was a member of the 4x100 relay team his Senior year that finished third in the state.

Beyond the fields Craig relished his time growing up competing on the swim teams and tennis teams at both Lakeside Field Club in North Salem, NY and Silver Spring

Country Club in Ridgefield, CT. The Ridgefield Boys Club was a sanctuary for Craig after school where he learned ping pong, paddle tennis, floor hockey, basketball and so much more about life. Two memorable athletic events Craig and his friends still talk about today are winning the town Softball title for Ridgefield Mobil and winning a town wide basketball tournament under the name “Junior Express.

After high school Craig went on to play lacrosse at Division Three powerhouse Ohio Wesleyan. Craig played in the National Championship game his Senior year and captained the team. He was named North Coast Athletic All Star his Sophomore and Junior seasons. In 2024 his 1987 team was honored on campus for being one of only four Ohio Wesleyan lacrosse teams in history to have made the national championship game. Craig and three college teammates were selected to play in Melbourne, Australia within the Australian lacrosse League.

Craig has had a rewarding career in fundraising and for the last eleven years has worked as Chief Advancement Officer at Blair Academy in New Jersey. Craig and his wife Trish reside in Mendham, New Jersey where they raised four children. Craig enjoyed coaching all of his children in youth sports. He continues to be competitive in all he does. ■

*Congratulations to  
all the honorees and to  
the ROTA committee for  
your continued support of  
our student athletes.*



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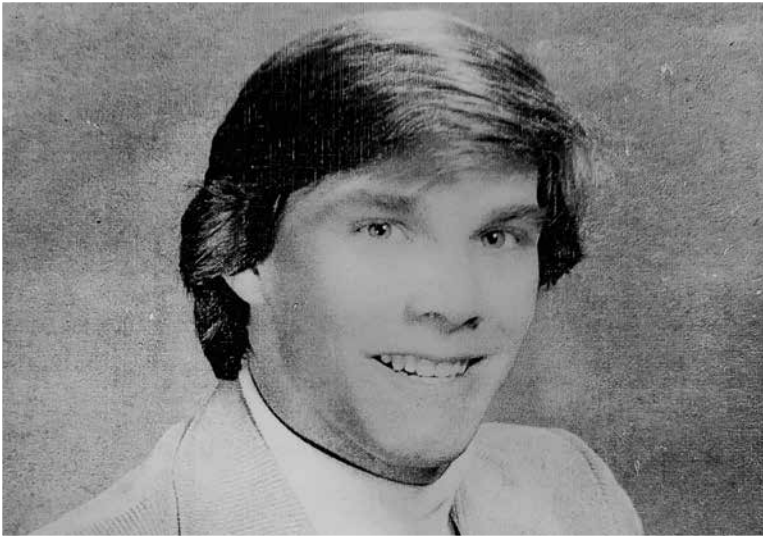
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SPORTS AWARD
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## John MacDonald

### *Inspired “Gym Rats”*

John MacDonald Jr. “Mac” is the third of Pat & Jack MacDonald’s (former honoree) seven children and the oldest of five brothers a role John takes great pride in.

John was a member of the RHS basketball teams of ‘77, ‘78 & 1979 and Co-captain in his senior year. John also played Freshmen football and varsity baseball through his Junior year as a pitcher. When John was a Jr. and Sr. the Ridgefield basketball was in the process of rebuilding after player and coaching differences in ‘78 and multiple team injuries in ‘79. This made it difficult for John and 6’5” senior and co-captain Ed Moir to succeed as a team. John was still able to excel and achieve All-FCIAC Eastern Division First Team honors. John was also named to the Danbury News Times All-Area First team and the Bridgeport Posts Class AA All-Star team.

Perhaps John’s most coveted award was the “Three D” award he received from RHS and the coaching staff. This award is given to a player that demonstrated “Desire, Determination and Dedication” within their sport.



He averaged 24.8 PPG on 51% shooting, 11 rebounds and 8 assists per game in his senior year. John was the second player from RHS to earn a full 4-year basketball scholarship with Tom Cesca (former honoree) being the first.

John takes great pride that the next full basketball scholarship recipient at RHS was his younger brother Tommy (former honoree & division 1 player) 10yrs later in '89. Brother Timmy, a member of the '89 RHS team, played 4 years at St Michael's College and was Captain in his Senior year. Brother Michael was captain his senior year in '84 and has coached college basketball in the Buffalo area for the past 37yrs across all three NCAA divisions, racking up 489 victories over 28 seasons as head coach.

In the 2024-25 season his team was ranked #1 in the country Division two and the only remaining undefeated college team, at any level, in the country at 28-0. This earned Michael Division 2 National Coach of the year honors. Brother Chris (Maco) attended Western Maryland College as well as a RHS football and basketball player. You can see why John takes such pride being the oldest brother of these RHS graduates and hopes he inspired them and maybe others in some small way. John went on to play 4 years at Dowling College in the Big Apple Conference and participated in the D2 National Championship Tournament in Kansas City.

John loved growing up in Ridgefield and considers himself a "Boys Clubber" and "GYM RAT". Being blessed with younger brothers he was able to play with them at the club over multiple generations fostering many friendships over the years from the mid 70s to the 90s. Saturday morning runs at the club were legendary and grew from hoping to get 10 players to play in the late 70s to 4-6 rotating teams in the late 80s! This growth in "Gym Rats" lead to RHS basketball finally regaining total respect in the FCIAC while Winning the East FCIAC for the first time in 1988 and a CT class LL State Tournament berth for his twin brother's RHS team in 1989.

John's athletic work ethic continued into his professional career after college as John and wife Laura worked very hard to become the youngest McDonald's owner/operators in the country at the time. After their McDonald's career, John and Laura went into insurance and have owned a local insurance agency for the past 20years. John has been married to Laura for over 40yrs and have two children Lauren and AJ. ■





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THE ROTA SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS
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## Angelo Ciminello

Angelo Ciminiello has been on the High Honor Roll every year since 2021. Angelo is also a member of the National Honor Society and was named the organization's Member of the Month in April 2025. According to his teachers, Angelo is an exceptional student who is persistent, curious, and humble.

Athletics have been a central part of Angelo's personal development. He played on the Ridgefield High School Varsity Ice Hockey team for four years and was a key player in the team's 2021 FCIAC Division 1 Championship win. He has received numerous awards, including the Grit Award, Player of the Year, and All-FCIAC 2nd Team honors. He also played lacrosse during his freshman and senior years. He is continuing his education at the University of Richmond.

Angelo has dedicated over 200 hours to the Appalachia Service Project, where he helped repair and renovate homes. He also received the Presidential Award for completing over 250 hours of community service, which included donating 500 sandwiches to Dorothy Day Hospitality House and making 80 blankets for the Senior Center. As an Executive Board Captain for Ridgefield Safe Rides, he helps coordinate safe rides for teenagers on weekends. Additionally, Angelo organized a fundraiser to support recovery efforts following the devastating 2023 storms in Vermont. ■

THE ROTA SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS
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## Rose Idone

Rose Idone has been a Ridgefield resident since 2013 and feels the town has provided her with opportunities to explore and grow. She attributes her personal development to the supportive mentors and teachers she has had throughout the Ridgefield school system.

Rose has been on the Ridgefield High School High Honor Roll for grades 9 through 12. Her academic recognitions include, a National Merit Scholarship Program Letter of Commendation and the University of Rochester Xerox Innovation Award. Rose has excelled in field hockey and ice hockey. She was a three-year varsity field hockey player, serving as captain in 2024 and earning the Game Ball of the Year award. She was also a four-year member of the RHS Girls Ice Hockey team, acting as captain for the 2024-2025 season and being named Defensive Player of the Year. She is currently attending Hamilton College.

Rose has volunteered as a coach for both Ridgefield Youth Field Hockey and Ridgefield Youth Ice Hockey. She also volunteers with the Ridgefield Conservation Commission, removing invasive plants from public parks. Rose has worked as a skating instructor at the Winter Garden Ice Arena and as a pro shop employee. She also had a unpaid mentorship experience at Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, where she worked in a lab and gained a better understanding of her academic passions. ■

## THE ROTA SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



## Haley Gilland

Haley Gilland believes that living in Ridgefield, which she considers her “village,” has helped her grow as a student, an athlete, a leader, and a volunteer. She has a rigorous academic record with a weighted GPA of 4.524 and has been on the High Honor Roll every term. Haley is a member of the National Honor Society, has earned the Connecticut Seal of Biliteracy in Spanish, and received a gold medal on the National Spanish Exam. She also plays the cello and is the Principal Cellist for the RHS Symphonic Orchestra.

Haley has a strong athletic background in lacrosse. She played lacrosse for Ridgefield Youth Lacrosse and on local club teams. At Ridgefield High School, she played on the varsity lacrosse team for three years. Her talent in the sport extended to the international level, as she played on the Italian National Women’s Lacrosse Team at the 2024 World U20 Women’s Lacrosse Championships. Haley is continuing her lacrosse career at Williams College.

Haley was a member of the National Charity League, holding various leadership positions, including President and Treasurer. She also volunteered as a music mentor for elementary school cello students and as a coach for the Ridgefield Youth Lacrosse team. ■

THE ROTA SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS
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## Hannah Gilland

Hannah Gilland has been on the High Honor Roll every term. Her academic recognitions include an AP Scholar Award with Honor and a Gold Medal on the National Spanish Exam. She is also a member of the National Honor Society and has a Connecticut Seal of Biliteracy in Spanish.

Hannah's athletic background is centered around lacrosse and soccer. She played on the Ridgefield High School varsity lacrosse team for three years. She also played for the Italian National Women's Lacrosse Team at the 2024 World U20 Women's Lacrosse Championships, where she was selected as player of the game twice. Hannah is continuing to play Division I lacrosse at Bucknell University, where she has received an athletic scholarship.

Beyond her athletic and academic pursuits, Hannah is a dedicated leader and volunteer. She was a member of the National Charity League and holds several leadership roles, including VP of Culture, Engagement, and Inclusion. She was also a member of the leadership teams for No Place for Hate and DECA, where she served as the VP of Operations. ■

## THE ROTA SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



## Jake Carney

Jake Carney has deep roots in the Ridgefield community. He has been a resident of Ridgefield his entire life. He describes how his aunts and uncles share the same experiences of growing up in the town, creating a unique connection that spans generations. For Jake, being from Ridgefield is not just about a place; it's a source of family pride and a shared identity. He appreciates the legacy of his relatives, including his uncle, who was an All-FCIAC soccer player, another who was a great hockey player, and his dad, who played on the developing Ridgefield lacrosse team.

Jake has a strong athletic background, with a particular focus on lacrosse. He was a four-year varsity player, a senior captain, and the recipient of the Tiger Pride award. He is continuing his lacrosse career at Sacred Heart University. His academic achievements include being on the honor roll three times and high honor twice.

Beyond his athletic and academic pursuits, Jake is an active member of his community, showcasing his leadership and work ethic. He coached Ridgefield Youth Lacrosse throughout high school and spent three years coaching house basketball. He has also served as a referee for Ridgefield Youth Lacrosse and has provided private lessons to young players. His work experience includes three years of working at a summer camp and three years of after-school care through Parks and Rec. Jake also volunteered with the Boys and Girls Club. ■





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## Past Old Timers' Awards

### Posthumous Awards

1994: Ralph Crouchley, Kip Holleran, Francis Martin; 1995: Chuck Walter, Charlie Ashbee, Frank Minnerly; 1996: Lou Girolmetti, John Sullivan, John Bacchiochi; 1997: Alex "Lick" Santini, Red Delugo, Bill Allen; 1998: Joseph Venus, Art Sfondrini, Bob Stolle; 1999: Alan Crowley, Don Ligos, Harold Hilton; 2000: Art Bellagamba, Stubb Cummings, Margaret O'Sullivan; 2001: Tony Deluca, Walt Ryba, Bob Seymour; 2002: John Sturges, Jimmy Warner; 2003: Scott Nye, Fred J. Romeo, Sr., Mario Scala; 2004: Steve Lancaster Bernie Leighton, Pete Carboni; 2005: Charlie Ritch; 2006: Roy Cogswell, Hank Wilson; 2007: Tony Del Biondo; 2008: James Principi, Jeanne Timpanelli; 2009: Bradford Mortensen and Edward Zandri; 2010: Richard Ligi, Richard McGlynn, Richard Serfilippi; 2011: Robert J. Morganti, Erik Hoag, Andrew Lecher; 2013: Gary Beaudine; 2014: Harold Finch, Percy Marshall Bouton; 2015: Stephanie Boles-Kavanagh; 2016: Tom Belote; 2017: Doris Ventres; 2018: Jack Herr; 2019: Steve Carboni; 2022: Doug Clewell, Jack MacDonald, Bill Owens; 2023: Sally Ruggles; 2024: George Hanlon

### Civic and Special Awards

1992: Richard Venus; 1993: Bob Tulipani; 1994: Beth Yanity; 1995: Aldo Tulipani; 1996: Ferdinand Bedini; 1997: Matty Pambianchi Family; 1998: Dr. Peter Yanity; 1999: Charles Coles; 2000: Kitty Rosa; 2001: Lewis Finch; 2002: Edith Meffley; 2003: Kay Ables; 2004: Chuck Dean; 2005: Doug Main, Renee Franks; 2006: Jack Sanders; 2007: Ancona Family; 2008: Maureen Kiernan, Dave Scott; 2009: Vincent Pannozzo, Jeanne Cook; 2010: Christine and Philip Lodewick; Chuck Camp; Reed Whipple; 2011: Mary and Nelson Gelfman; Terry Hastings; 2012: Martha and Dave Campbell, Joseph Consentino; 2013: Richard and Deirdre Aarons, George Besse; 2014: Darla and Ben Shaw; Joy and Hank Kutcha, Joyce Ligi; 2015: Liz & Steven Goldstone, Bill Craig; 2016: John and Elaine Couri; 2017: Janice Pauly; 2018: Barbara Manners and Eugene Healy; 2019: Peter Seirup, Mike Bedini; 2022: Denise Qualey, Amy & Scott Russel; 2023: Larry & Nancy Bossidy, Walter & Anne Beatty; 2024: Debbie Ahle, Joel Third

### Educator Awards

2013: Dr. Harold E. Healy and Dirk Bollenback; 2014: Dr. Philip Pitruzzello; 2015: Bob Cox; 2016: James Muraski; 2017: Joan Voss; 2018: Bill Monti; 2019: Bob McDonald; 2022: Jean Jaykus; 2023: Denise Charboneau; 2024: Jan Siegel

### Arts Awards

2019: Kevin Briody; 2022: Tina Sturges; 2023: Mark Salzman; 2024: John Voorhees

### Sports Awards

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

Si Bellagamba, Gene Lavatori, John Lavatori, Gene McMahon, Harry Pierandri; 2000: Glen Anderson, Bill Elliot, Booker Jackson, Tom Mitchell; 2001: Ned Carboni, Paul 52 Carboni, Jim Costanzi, John Fossi, Artie Frattini, Nick Reid, Gloria Sharkany; 2002: Ed Dowling, Jack Jones, Jack O'Keefe, Jim O'Keefe, Mike Ryba, Aldo Travaglini, Harry Zandri; 2003: Aldo Biagiotti, Chip Bliss, Bob Carboni, John Forcelli, Jim Mullen, Vince Paccadolmi, Fred Romeo; 2004: Faust Verna, Lou Bellagamba, Chip Salvestrini, Alley Frulla, Rudy Marconi, Jim Tulipani and the CYO Girls Championship Basketball Team; 2005: Tom Cesca, Tom Santini, Richard Polverari, Bob Pambianchi, Gregg Hutchings, Carol Torcellini, Dave Campbell, Bill Polverari, Renzo Falcinelli, Jimmy Bacchiochi; 2006: Larry Bossidy, Jr., Isabel Caporale, Frank Lancaster, Jr., Carl Scala, John Stolle, Dave Sturges; 2007: Dave Landers, Jay Contessa, Chip Dean, John Devendorf, Marie Frulla, Steve Martin, Alan Wallace; 2008: Richard Lavatori, Judy Laslo, Craig Saltzgaber, Frank Serfilippi, Paul Vaughn, Chip Wilson; 2009: Robert Leary, Robert Lewis, Patricia Girolametti, Richard Miller, Peter Santini, Michael Principi, and Dr. Richard Scala; 2010: Abe Morelli, Tom Fossi, Michael Bowman, Amy Fredericks, Christopher Winnes, Janel Jorgensen, Michael Dell'Aquila, Tony Wilmot; 2011: Lee Pasquarella, Harland Brooks, Janet Yanity, Harry Geary, Thomas McDonald, Joseph Korczynski, Lea Ann Schmidt, Gary Bellagamba; 2012: Michael Conroy, Anthony James Forcelli, Beth Ondrick Gattey, Terence Hughes, George R. Mulvaney, Phil O'Brien, Walt Valentine; 2013: William 'Sandy' Allen, Paul Bossidy, Dorene Almgren DeCecco, Mike Harris, Mike Maiolo, Ed Stone, Nicole Colanari Twomey; 2014: John Lorenzini, Peter Stuart Jongbloed, Brian Sullivan, Thomas Scala, Sandy Beal Carpenter, Nicole Muschett DiAntonio, Neil Ringers; 2015: Don Innamorato, Richard Dingee, Susi Mang McDonald, Guy Welton, Karen Dingee Leibowitz; 2016: Al Diniz, John Kreisher, Jack Hughes, Jim Croce, 1967-68 Football Team, Chip Wood, William Van Orman, Cliff Onolfo, Kate McMorran Leavey, Sue Ellis; 2017: Dr. Joseph Connelly, Nancy Ruhl Hurley, Bo Beatty, Danny Geary, Amy Walter Hillenbrand, Dr. Theodore Librizzi; 2018: Stan Engelhardt, Bob Phalen, Mike Bossidy, Lena Onyshkewych; 2019: Bridget Stearns, John Hughes, Kevin Morris; 2022: A.J. Martinich, Sarah Townsend Pomposello, Pat Cozens, Miles Tullo, Mike Bellagamba; 2023: Bob DeCosta, Kristy Webster Liesegang, Katie O'Toole, 1983 State Champion Football Team, 1977 Boys Relay Track Team; 2024: Gregg Bechard, Lori Lidia McDevitt, Darrel Diniz, Bob Landers, Julie Perrelli, 1983 & 1984 RHS Boys Soccer Teams

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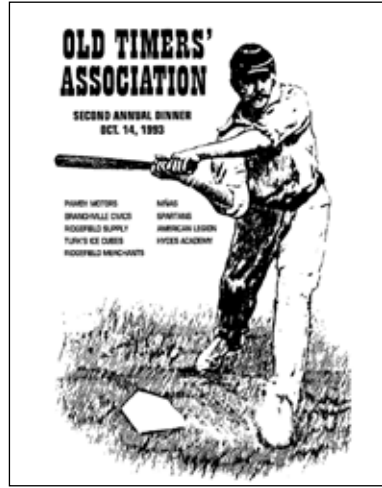
# Ridgefield Old Timers Association:

*Honoring Ridgefielders since 1992*

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

The original purpose of the new organization was to honor great athletes who were unable to continue their education past their school days, and set up a scholarship to assist current athletes. The organizers held several meetings and drew in 18 other supporters. They elected a board of officers with Paul Baker as the first chairman. Walt Evans was elected treasurer, and Julie Petrini, the first secretary.

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



**The 1993 dinner program's cover.**

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

The first award of the scholarship to a female Ridgefield High School graduate occurred in 1996. Janine Murphy was involved in three sports and many civic endeavors. A year later, it was decided to annually award scholarships to both male and female recipients, and the winners in 1997 were

Charles Bliss and Kerry Bennett. The amount of the scholarships has grown over the years as a result of the advertising placed in this book, as well as other fundraising efforts — especially the annual golf outing and pig roast, which took place in June at the Ridgefield Golf Course.

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

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



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

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page 5.*



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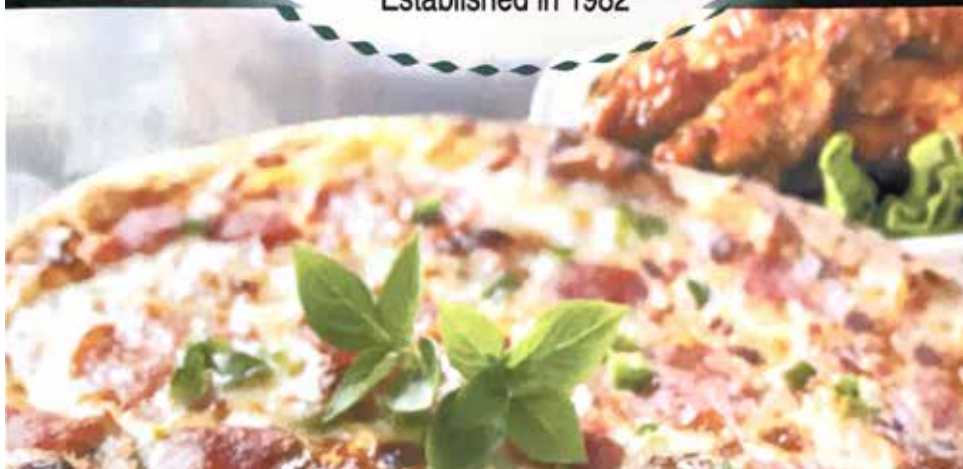
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