



NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION

9100 Keystone Crossing, Suite 650, Indianapolis, IN 46240

317-587-1450, FAX 317.587.1451 / www.niaaa.org

NIAAA to Present 12 Distinguished Service Awards

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Bruce Whitehead

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (November 28, 2007) — Twelve individuals who have made outstanding contributions to interscholastic athletics have been named recipients of the 2007 Distinguished Service Awards given by the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA).

These individuals will be honored December 17 in Nashville, Tennessee, during the luncheon at the 38th annual National Conference of High School Directors of Athletics conducted jointly by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) and the NIAAA.

The Distinguished Service Award is presented annually to individuals from within the NIAAA membership, as well as those outside the field of athletic administration, in recognition of their length of service, special accomplishments and contributions to interscholastic athletics at the local, state and national levels. Nominations are

submitted by state athletic director associations, screened by the NIAAA Awards Committee, and selected by the NIAAA Board of Directors.

This year's award winners include 10 from within the NIAAA membership, and two from outside the NIAAA who have contributed to interscholastic athletics in other ways.

John Roberts, executive director of the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association for almost 30 years, and **Deana Sessions**, administrator for the United Dairymen of Idaho, will be awarded the Distinguished Service Award for their service outside the field of athletic administration.

Those from within the NIAAA membership who will be honored include **Darryl Anderson**, CAA, executive director of the North Dakota Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association; **Kevin Bryant**, CMAA, associate principal for athletics and activities, Tigard (Oregon) High School; **Blane Gaison**, CAA, co-director of athletics, Kamehameha (Hawaii) Schools; **Cass Herbst**, CAA, athletic director at Nampa (Idaho) East Valley Middle School; **Karen Leinaar**, CAA, district athletic director of Benzie County Central Schools in Benzonia, Michigan; **Paul Mengold**, CAA, athletic director, Woodbridge (Connecticut) Amity Regional School District; **Marc Payne**, CMAA, athletic director, West Jefferson (North Carolina) Ashe County High School; **Peg Pennepacker**, CAA, Title IX consultant and administrator, Elverson, Pennsylvania; **Phil Rison**, CMAA, director of operations, Mount Sterling (Kentucky) Montgomery County Schools; and **Sheri Stice**, CMAA, associate athletic director, Houston (Texas) Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District.

Following are the biographical sketches of this year's award winners:

For more than 60 years, **John Roberts** made profound contributions to the sport of wrestling as an athlete, coach and official, and distinguished himself as one of the nation's top high school state association administrators.

A two-time undefeated wrestler at West Des Moines (Iowa) Valley High School, Roberts continued his career at the University of Wisconsin, where he was a two-time Big 10 champion, and also played football for the Badgers.

From there, he impacted the sport by starting the wrestling program at Stevens Point (Wisconsin) High School, where he coached six years and won one state title, and also coached football and track. He then coached those same three sports for six years at Central State College (now the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point).

In addition to officiating at the high school and college levels for more than 20 years, Roberts served as the executive director of the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA) from 1957 to 1985. During his time with the WIAA, the number of boys sports teams grew from 1,750 to 2,325, and after originating in 1970-71, girls sports grew to 10 sports and 2,325 teams when he retired.

At the national level, Roberts served on the NFHS Executive Committee and was vice president for one year. He served as the NFHS' delegate to the NCAA Wrestling Rules Committee and as chair of the first NFHS Wrestling Committee for a combined 25 years, as the nation's foremost authority for high school wrestling.

Scholastic Wrestling News named Roberts "Man of the Year" in 1974. He was inducted into University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point Hall of Fame (1975), the University of Wisconsin Hall of Fame (1994) and the Wisconsin High School Halls of Fame for wrestling and football. In 1985, he received the NFHS Award of Merit, and in 2000, he was inducted into both the Iowa Wrestling Hall of Fame and the National High School Hall of Fame.

For the past 23 years, the United Dairymen of Idaho (UDI) has partnered with the Idaho High School Activities Association (IHSAA), resulting in more than \$3.4 million for sponsored state tournaments, and **Deana Sessions** has played a pivotal role in the process.

Sessions is the administrator for the UDI, which is the group that represents Idaho's dairy farm families, and has been with the organization for 28 years. With her guidance and support, the UDI has been committed to youth development in all of the IHSAA's student activities.

She also has helped to build a partnership between the UDI and the Idaho Athletic Administrators Association (IAAA) since 1998. The UDI has donated more than \$61,000 to the IAAA to help carry out its objectives, and it all stemmed from Sessions' recommendations to the UDI Board of Directors.

Locally, she has been the stimulus for athletic programs at Idaho high schools. She and the UDI Board have administered funding for the programs so they could be free of charge for the schools. Sessions has provided a full-page ad on the back cover of the programs, which the UDI pays to the schools that requested the ad.

Her administration of the UDI's Distinguished Student Award program has also shown her commitment to the development of Idaho's youth. The program started in 2002, and since then, more than \$180,000 in scholarships have been donated to schools of students who have been selected as Distinguished Students thanks in large part to Sessions' efforts.

Since his retirement as athletic director at Mandan (North Dakota) High School in 2002, **Darryl Anderson**, CAA, has been executive director of the North Dakota Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NDIAAA). He has a notable history serving high school athletes, as well as the memberships of both the NDIAAA and the

NIAAA. During the past 19 years, he has made substantial contributions in athletic administration both to the Peace Garden State and to the nation.

At the local level, Anderson is responsible for adding soccer, ice hockey and baseball to Mandan High School's athletic program. He also established a new athletic budget system for the school district, and re-energized the booster club to the point that it now donates at least \$25,000 annually to the school district's athletic department. Anderson is also responsible for developing an evaluation system for coaches.

Anderson served as secretary-treasurer, vice president and president of the Western Dakota Association (WDA). Upon his retirement from Mandan in 2002, he was tabbed as the WDA's first-ever executive secretary, a position he holds today along with his NDIAAA duties.

Anderson extended his service to the North Dakota High School Activities Association (NDHSAA), where he served on both its Athletic Review Committee and Tournament Committee. He has also managed 87 NDHSAA-sponsored athletic tournaments at the district, regional and state levels in both Class A and B enrollment classifications. In addition, he organized a joint NDHSAA/NDIAAA committee to create event management handbooks.

As a 19-year member of the NIAAA and 12-time conference attendee, Anderson served as the North Dakota delegate to the annual conference three times and currently serves as the NIAAA liaison for the state. He also has been active on the National Executive Directors Council, as well as with the NIAAA National Emergency Network.

Kevin Bryant, CMAA, associate principal for athletics and activities at Tigard (Oregon) High School, has distinguished himself as a coach, educator and

administrator. He received both his bachelor's and master's degrees at Western Washington University, and earned his administrative license at Portland (Oregon) State University in 2006.

Bryant began his career in interscholastic athletics as an assistant basketball coach at Eugene (Oregon) Churchill High School in 1982. In 1987, he moved to the collegiate ranks as assistant basketball coach and alumni relations representative at his alma mater. Two years later, he was promoted to director of athletic marketing and promotions.

He remained at Western Washington until 1993 when he took over as director of athletics and head men's tennis coach at Whitworth (Washington) College. After two more career stops, Bryant returned to high school athletics in 1999 as athletic director of Aloha High School in Beaverton, Oregon, where he remained until joining the Tigard staff in 2005.

Bryant has also been active in the Young Life program in both Oregon and Washington, serving the organization as a volunteer, area director and the director of development.

At the state level, Bryant was a member of the Washington State High School Coaches Association from 1993 to 1995, and has been a member of both the Oregon Athletic Coaches Association and the Oregon Athletic Directors Association (OADA) since 1999. Currently the past president of the OADA Executive Board, he was named Oregon's Athletic Director of the Year in 2005. In addition, he received the NIAAA State Award of Merit in both 2006 and 2007.

Within the NIAAA, Bryant has completed 11 courses in the NIAAA Leadership Training Program, is a member of the NIAAA Credentials Committee and is the LTC coordinator for the state of Oregon.

Hailing from America's 50th state, **Blane Gaison**, CAA, has been an influential leader in high school sports both on the Hawaiian Islands and on The Mainland. The co-director of athletics of Kamehameha (Hawaii) Schools Kapalama Campus, Gaison received his bachelor's degree in political science and pre-law from the University of Hawaii in 1981, and went on to study theology at Pacific Rim (Hawaii) Bible College.

After a four-year career with the Atlanta Falcons of the National Football League, Gaison joined Kamehameha Schools in 1989 to serve as the assistant athletic director and head football coach. Since 1996, he has coordinated numerous sports for the Interscholastic League of Honolulu (ILH). Gaison had a six-year stint as the ILH president from 1999 to 2005, and served as the organization's interim executive director from 2000 to 2002.

During the past five years, Gaison has held numerous leadership positions within both the Hawaii High School Athletic Association (HHSAA) and the Hawaii Interscholastic Athletic Directors Association (HIADA). He currently serves on the HHSAA Board of Directors and Classification Committee, formerly served on its Strategic Planning Committee, and was tournament director in the sports of swimming and diving, track and field, and canoe paddling. A member of the HIADA Board of Directors, he has been the organization's conference moderator since 2002.

An NIAAA member since 1992, Gaison served on its Board of Directors from 2002 to 2005. During that timeframe, he was an Awards Committee member, a Certification Committee member, and a member of the NIAAA Strategic Planning Committee. He also presented at three national conferences, is Hawaii's representative in the NIAAA Delegate Assembly, and received the NIAAA State Award of Merit and the NFHS Citation Award in 2005 and 2006, respectively.

Cass Herbst, CAA, is currently in her 22nd year of teaching and her ninth year as an athletic administrator. Originally from Twin Falls, Idaho, Herbst earned a bachelor's degree in secondary education from Idaho State University, and a master's degree in athletic administration from Boise (Idaho) State University and Idaho State University. In 1986, Herbst began her career as a teacher and a track and girls basketball coach at Middleton (Idaho) High School. After a 14-year stint at Nampa (Idaho) West Middle School, Herbst became athletic director and track coach at Nampa (Idaho) East Valley Middle School when it opened in 2003.

At the local level, Herbst served as president of the Intervalley League from 2004 to 2006, after a term as secretary the previous four years. She has been a tournament director for several middle school league tournaments, instituted a middle school sportsmanship award, and was the district physical education department chair from 2003 to 2005.

Since becoming an athletic administrator, Herbst has been an active member of both the Idaho Athletic Administrators Association (IAAA) and the NIAAA. As the first middle school athletic director in the state to obtain the CAA designation, she has served on the IAAA Board of Directors since 2004 and previously was its executive secretary. Herbst, who is the state LTC coordinator for Idaho, was named Idaho's Athletic Director of the Year in both 2002 and 2007.

At the national level, Herbst received the NIAAA Idaho State Award of Merit in 2004, and has served on its Awards Committee since 2005. She has completed 21 LTC courses, attended the past seven national conferences, and was Idaho's representative on the NIAAA Delegate Assembly three times.

Hailing from the Great Lake State of Michigan, **Karen Leinaar**, CAA, has been a leader at the local, statewide and national levels for nearly a quarter century.

The district athletics director of Benzie County Central Schools in Benzonia, Michigan, Leinaar has long been highly involved with the NIAAA. She served as a member of the NIAAA Awards Committee from 1993 to 2002, capped by a term as chairperson. A delegate assembly member at five national conferences, Leinaar served on the NFHS Athletic Directors Advisory Committee from 1995 to 2000. She has spoken or presided at three national conferences and is an NIAAA Leadership Training Program instructor in 12 courses. An NIAAA Blue Ribbon Committee member in 2001, Leinaar received an NFHS Citation that same year.

At the state level, Leinaar is equally active. A member of the Michigan Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (MIAAA) since 1984, she has attended 23 state conferences and spoke or presided at 15 of them. She was MIAAA Awards Committee co-chairperson from 1989 to 1999, and was the organization's recording secretary, second vice president, first vice president, president and past president. Since 2004, she has been a member of the annual convention planning committee and in 2001, was named Region 2 Athletic Director of the Year.

In 1999, Leinaar became the first woman to be elected to the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) Representative Council, a position she still holds today. A member of numerous MHSAA sports committees, she has been involved with selection of both tournament officials and sites, and was manager of state tournaments in volleyball, wrestling and alpine skiing.

At the local level, Leinaar started a Hall of Fame for the Delton-Kellogg Schools in 1995, served as president of the Kalamazoo Valley Association, and implemented a student sportsmanship committee for the Benzie County Central Schools.

Paul Mengold, CAA, athletic director of the Woodbridge (Connecticut) Amity Regional School District, has devoted more than 30 years to high school athletics at the local, state and national levels.

Within his school district, Mengold expanded the athletic program offerings from 35 to 78 teams and implemented a full-time staff athletic trainer position. In 1994, he was a founding member of the Southern Connecticut Conference, and subsequently became secretary in 1995–96 and president in 2004–05. He has been committee chairperson in the sports of boys basketball, boys and girls cross country, and boys volleyball, and tournament site director in girls basketball, wrestling and boys volleyball.

At the state level, Mengold has had a significant presence in the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC). He has been the site director for numerous state tournaments, including boys and girls basketball and soccer, field hockey and baseball. He formerly was a consultant to the boys basketball and boys cross country committees, and currently is a consultant to the CIAC Board of Control.

For the past 23 years, Mengold has been a member of the Connecticut Association of Athletic Directors (CAAD) and served as its president from 2002 to 2004. He currently is chairman of the New Athletic Directors Mentor Program as well as the CAA test coordinator. In 1998, he received the CAAD Distinguished Service Award.

A 23-year NIAAA member, Mengold has served on the Awards Committee, the second Strategic Planning Committee and the Membership/Services Committee. He has attended 17 national conferences and has been a workshop speaker or moderator on three occasions.

Marc Payne, CMAA, athletic director and head boys basketball coach at West Jefferson (North Carolina) Ashe County High School, has been a teacher, coach, athletic director and assistant principal at three North Carolina high schools the past 33 years.

Prior to joining the Ashe County staff in 2002, Payne served 14 years at Beaver Creek High School, also in West Jefferson, and 13 years at Watauga High School in Boone. He also was the president of the Blue Ridge Athletic Conference for 11 years and the Northwestern Athletic Conference for three years.

Payne, who received his bachelor's degree in history at Emory and Henry (Virginia) College and his master's degree in educational administration at Appalachian State (North Carolina) University, has garnered much of his success at the state level.

He has served on the Boards of Directors for the North Carolina High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA), the North Carolina Athletic Directors Association and the North Carolina Coaches Association (NCCA), and was president of the North Carolina Basketball Coaches Association from 1998 to 2000.

Payne has received numerous awards from the NCHSAA, including the Proclamation of Achievement and the Citation Award in 1993 and the Award of Merit in 1995. Other awards include the NCADA President's Award in 2002 and the NIAAA State Award of Merit in 2003.

During Payne's 32-year career as a head varsity boys basketball coach, he has won 468 games and earned 12 coach-of-the-year awards. His teams have won 10 conference championships and four sectional titles. He also is an active member and volunteer within the Ashe County community.

As one of the leading Title IX consultants and administrators in the nation, **Peg Pennepacker**, CAA, has been at the forefront of gender equity in high school sports and education for a number of years. She authored the lead story on Title IX for the first

issue of High School Today, published by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS).

Pennepacker is a leader within the Pennsylvania State Athletic Directors Association (PSADA), serving on the PSADA Executive Council as the Title IX consultant, and the PSADA Professional Development Committee.

Nationally, she is an NIAAA Leadership Training Program National Faculty member, and is national chairperson of LTC 506 on Title IX and Sexual Harassment. She has traveled around the country teaching the different aspects of Title IX and other sports law workshops.

During Pennepacker's 25 years in public education, she has been a high school athletic director for 16 of those years. She also has been a teacher, assistant principal, official and head coach of numerous sports. Most recently, she was athletic director at Twin Valley High School in Elverson, Pennsylvania.

Pennepacker earned her bachelor's degree in health and physical education from Lock Haven (Pennsylvania) University and her master's degree in sport and athletic administration from West Chester (Pennsylvania) University. She is currently an adjunct faculty member at West Chester.

The NIAAA recognized her nationally in 2003 with the State Award of Merit. Title IX also stimulated Pennepacker to start the High School Title IX Consulting Services, which focuses on helping high schools with Title IX compliance. She continues to be an active writer in many professional magazines and literature.

For the past 22 years, **Phil Rison**, CMAA, has promoted the benefits of interscholastic athletics and education on local, state and national levels.

Currently the director of operations for Mount Sterling (Kentucky) Montgomery County Schools, Rison has served as a boys basketball and baseball head coach,

teacher, assistant principal and athletic director at a multitude of Kentucky high schools.

He also has been an integral part of the Kentucky High School Athletic Directors Association (KHSADA). Rison served as a KHSADA board member from Region 10 in 1994 and 1995, and eventually became KHSADA president from 2004 to 2006.

Rison also has played a key role in the Kentucky High School Athletic Association (KHSAA), as he was a policy board member and policy board chairman, and was a KHSAA delegate representative from 1994 to 2006. As a KHSAA tournament manager, Rison has set up various postseason athletic events including district basketball, sectional soccer and regional baseball.

As a 12-year member of the NIAAA, Rison has attended every National Conference of High School Directors of Athletics since 1995, and was also a workshop facilitator and presenter at the 2005 and 2006 conferences. He also is national chairperson of LTC 508.

Rison has earned many awards throughout his illustrious tenure. In 1992, he was the Teacher of the Year for the Montgomery County Schools; in 2003, he was named Kentucky Athletic Director of the Year; and in 2006, Rison was inducted into the 10th Region Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

Sheri Stice, CMAA, associate athletic director for the Houston (Texas) Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District (CFISD), has been a key administrator in the successes of the CFISD and in every other educational medium she has been a part of since 1974.

After Stice received her bachelor's and master's degrees at Huntsville (Texas) Sam Houston State University, she became a health and physical education teacher and a head coach of four different sports at Houston (Texas) St. Pius X High School. She

joined the CFISD staff in 1978, and had a six-year stint as a middle school teacher and coach, and 11 years as assistant principal of two middle schools where she helped to build the education environment and helped enhance the growth of adolescents.

Stice has been CFISD associate athletic director and coordinator for secondary physical education and Special Olympics since 1995. She managed to procure a \$1.3 million National Fitness Foundation Grant and a \$1 million federal PEP Grant for physical education. She also assisted in launching the Mind, Body and Attitude program within the district.

Nationally, she serves as the vice chairperson of the NIAAA Certification Committee and also is the state liaison between the Texas High School Athletic Directors Association and the NIAAA.

###

ABOUT THE NATIONAL INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION (NIAAA):

The NIAAA is the largest national organization for high school athletic administrators with more than 7,000 individual members. The NIAAA consists of athletic director organizations in the 50 states plus the District of Columbia and provides an efficient system for exchange of ideas between the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) and state athletic administrators organizations as well as individual athletic administrators. The NIAAA, located in Indianapolis, Indiana, strives to preserve the educational nature of interscholastic athletics and the place of these programs in the curricula of schools. The NIAAA is a full and equal partner with the NFHS.

About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and fine arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and fine arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 18,500 high schools and 11 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; produces publications for high school coaches, officials and athletic directors; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, spirit coaches, speech and debate coaches and music adjudicators; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS Web site at www.nfhs.org.