

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE
HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS



NEWS RELEASE

NFHS Awards Citations to Eight Athletic Directors

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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INDIANAPOLIS, IN (November 25, 2019) — The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) will award NFHS Citations to eight high school athletic directors December 16 in National Harbor, Maryland, during luncheon festivities at the 50th annual National Athletic Directors Conference sponsored jointly by the NFHS and the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA).

NFHS Citations are presented annually to outstanding athletic directors in recognition of contributions to interscholastic athletics at the local, state and national levels. State associations nominate athletic directors for NFHS Citations, and the NFHS Board of Directors approves recipients.

This year's award winners are **Ted D'Alessio**, CMAA, retired athletic director, Millburn (New Jersey) Township Public School District; **Johnny Johnson**, CMAA, athletic administrator, Russellville (Arkansas) School District; **Joe Keller**, CAA, assistant principal and athletic director, Fife (Washington) High School; **Mike McGurk**, CMAA, activities director, Lee's Summit (Missouri) North High School; **Robert Northridge**, CMAA, Southern Nevada coordinator, Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association; **Paul Powers**, CAA, athletic director, Aurora (Ohio) City

Schools; **Lanness Robinson**, CMAA, director of athletics, Hillsborough County Public Schools, Tampa, Florida; and **Fred Smith**, CMAA, retired director of athletics, Stevensville, Michigan.

Following are biographical sketches on this year's NFHS Citation recipients:

Ted D'Alessio, CMAA

Ocean City, New Jersey

Dr. Ted D'Alessio, CMAA, served the Millburn (New Jersey) Township Public School District for 40 years until his retirement in 2016. In that time, D'Alessio was responsible for 29 varsity sports, 41 junior varsity and freshman level programs, and 75 coaches. D'Alessio's commitment also extended to serving as the health and physical education supervisor at Millburn High School.

After earning his bachelor's degree in health, physical education and recreation from Springfield (Massachusetts) College in 1976, D'Alessio received his master's degree from Montclair State (New Jersey) University in 1981. D'Alessio played football at Springfield all four years and later coached football and track at Millburn. He had an overall record of 123-31 in track, which included four undefeated outdoor teams. Prior to becoming Millburn's director of athletics in 1993, D'Alessio earned his doctorate of education degree from New York University in 1991.

As an athletic administrator, D'Alessio has made significant contributions at the state and national levels. Since 2002, he has been a member of the Directors of Athletics Administrators of New Jersey (DAANJ) Board of Trustees and was the DAANJ president from 2014 to 2016. Additionally, D'Alessio has been a presenter and moderator for numerous New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) and DAANJ workshops.

On the national scene, D'Alessio was one of New Jersey's first athletic directors to receive CMAA certification through the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA). Among his service, D'Alessio has been a member of the NIAAA Coaches Education Committee since 2010 and chairman since 2017. He has also been a member of the NIAAA Certification Committee (2001-09) and Communications/Issues/Resolutions Committee (2000-

01). In addition, D'Alessio currently serves on the NFHS Education Committee as the NIAAA representative.

In 2012, D'Alessio became the sixth athletic director from New Jersey to receive the NIAAA Distinguished Service Award. The 2012 recipient of the DAANJ Athletic Director of the Year award, he also collected the DAANJ Distinguished Service Award in 2016 and was inducted into the association's Hall of Fame in 2019.

Johnny Johnson, CMAA

Russellville, Arkansas

After 11 years as a successful college basketball coach at the University of the Ozarks, Johnny Johnson, CMAA, began his career in high school athletic administration in 2001. His 18-year career began with his hometown Little Rock (Arkansas) School District in 2001, and he is currently in the same position with the Russellville (Arkansas) School District.

Johnson led the University of the Ozarks to a 173-126 record – the best in school history – and the Eagles appeared in two NAIA National Tournaments.

The Little Rock School District was the largest in the state when Johnson arrived in 2001. While there, he worked to improve numerous athletic facilities, started playing high school basketball games in what is now Verizon Arena in North Little Rock, and he founded the “Jammin’ For Jackets” Basketball Tournament to raise money for letter jackets for Little Rock School District student-athletes. Since moving to the Russellville School District in 2012, Johnson has started the “Hoops For Hunger” Basketball Tournament, which has raised more than \$200,000 for two local charities.

Johnson was president of the Arkansas High School Athletic Administrators Association (AHSAAA) from 2007 to 2009 after serving as vice president (2005-07), secretary (2003-05) and program chair (2001-03). From 2009 to 2011, Johnson was the AHSAAA's liaison to the Arkansas Activities Association (AAA) Board of Directors.

Johnson has been a tremendous contributor to the AAA as a tournament host. He has been tournament director for AAA state championships in tennis, golf, softball, soccer, basketball and

track. He also has taught Leadership Training classes at the AHSAAA state conference, and has led an annual seminar for new athletic directors.

In addition to the AHSAAA Distinguished Service Award, Johnson has received national recognition as a recipient of the NIAAA State Award of Merit. A member of the NIAAA Board of Directors since 2017, Johnson has completed 25 Leadership Training classes and has attended 15 national conferences.

Joe Keller, CAA

Lakewood, Washington

Joe Keller, CAA, has been a fixture in Washington interscholastic athletics for 16 years. The assistant principal and athletic director at Fife (Washington) High School since 2012, Keller added the duties of executive director of the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA) West Central District III in 2016.

Prior to his arrival at Fife, Keller was a teacher/coach (2000-04) and athletic director (2004-11) at Lakes High School in Lakewood, Washington, and a teacher and coach at Curtis High School in University Place, Washington (1984-99). Keller began his career at Sheridan (Oregon) High School from 1981 to 1983, where he was a teacher and an assistant coach for baseball, basketball and football.

At Curtis High School, Keller was the head baseball coach and an assistant football coach. During his 12 years as baseball coach, his teams qualified for the state playoffs 11 times, including one third-place finish. In 2004, Keller received his first opportunity to serve as an athletic director at Lakes, and he assisted in the design and development of new state-of-the-art facilities.

Keller has been a prominent member of the Washington Secondary Schools Athletic Administrators Association (WSSAAA), serving on the executive board since 2010 and a term as president in 2016. Since 2009, Keller has also served as a member of the WSSAAA Leadership Training Institute (LTI) faculty at the state conference.

Nationally, Keller serves as vice chair of the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA) Publications Committee. He also has been an NIAAA state delegate, and has had multiple roles with LTI courses that, among others, include serving as a breakout and LTI moderator since 2016 and becoming a certified LTI test administrator in 2010.

A 1980 graduate of Washington State University in Pullman, Keller earned his bachelor's degree in English and education from the school before later receiving his continuing teacher certificate. He later earned his master's from City University in Renton, Washington, and a master's from Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, Arizona, in 2012. Keller was drafted by the Los Angeles Dodgers out of high school and pitched in the organization for five years before injuries ended his career.

Mike McGurk, CMAA

Lee's Summit, Missouri

Mike McGurk's, CMAA, athletic administration career has been divided between the states of Virginia (2002-08) and Missouri (2008-present).

After a 10-year coaching career at Lake Braddock Secondary School in Virginia, McGurk was director of student activities at Thomas Jefferson High School in Alexandria, Virginia, for one year, followed by five years in a similar position at James W. Robinson Secondary School in Fairfax, Virginia.

During his years at James Robinson, McGurk coordinated a \$200,000 facility improvement plan and hosted several Virginia High School League (VHSL) state championships.

McGurk moved to Missouri in 2008 and served five years as activities director at Jefferson City High School and is currently in his seventh year as activities director at Lee's Summit North High School.

At Lee's Summit North, McGurk has started a Student Activity Advisory Council, and he designed a "Rising Freshman Preview Night" for the school and its student body. Outside the school, McGurk has served as secretary of the Kansas City Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association since 2015.

McGurk, who was a recipient of the 2017 National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA) State Award of Merit, became involved with the Missouri Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (MIAAA) once he moved to Missouri by helping implement its first strategic plan and a mentoring program for new athletic directors. He also was MIAAA president from 2015 to 2017, and has served on the MIAAA Board of Directors since 2012.

Nationally, McGurk has had articles published in *Interscholastic Athletic Administration* (IAA) magazine. He was a member of the NIAAA Awards Committee for five years, including a year as chair, and he was elected to the NIAAA Board of Directors in 2018. McGurk has completed 23 Leadership Training classes and has attended 16 consecutive National Athletic Directors Conferences.

McGurk received his bachelor's degree in English literature from George Mason University (Virginia) and also possesses a master's degree in education leadership. This year, he earned his education specialist degree from the University of Central Missouri.

Robert Northridge, CMAA

Boulder City, Nevada

After retiring from a 32-year career with the Clark County (Nevada) School District, Robert Northridge, CMAA, assumed his current duties as Southern Nevada Coordinator for the Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association (NIAA).

Prior to becoming an athletic administrator, Northridge coached wrestling at Valley High School in the Clark County School District from 1980 to 1987. He also coached wrestling for Boulder City (Nevada) High School from 1989 to 1995 and boys golf from 1994 to 2011. Northridge was named athletic director at Boulder City in 1994, and remained in that role until 2008.

After retiring from Boulder City, Northridge was executive director of the Nevada Athletic Directors Association (NADA) for one year before becoming the NIAA's Southern Nevada Coordinator the next year.

During his time as athletic director, Northridge was the tournament director or assistant director for more than 100 Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association (NIAA) regional or state

championship tournaments. He served on several NIAA committees, including the Realignment, Hall of Fame Selection and State Scheduling Committees.

Since 2008, Northridge has served as a course instructor for the Leadership Training Institute (LTI) facilitated by the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA). Nationally, Northridge also has twice served as the state's liaison to the NIAAA Delegate Assembly at the NADC and was a member of the National Federation of High School Associations (NFHS) Coach Education Committee from 2014 to 2017.

Among his honors, Northridge was the 2009 recipient of the NIAAA State Award of Merit. In 2004, he was recognized as the Nevada State Athletic Administrator of the Year and, in 2001, as the Nevada State Athletic Director of the Year.

The passion Northridge has for his job has resulted in his attendance at every National Athletic Directors Conference for the past 20 years.

Northridge earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and his master's from Nova Southeastern University.

Paul Powers, CAA

Aurora, Ohio

Paul Powers has been a successful athletic administrator at three schools in Ohio for more than 26 years. Since 2008, he has served as the athletic director for the Aurora City Schools.

After earning his bachelor's degree in sports management from Ohio Northern University in 1991 and working two years as a recreation supervisor in Orange, Ohio, Powers assumed the director of athletics role at West Geauga Local Schools in Chesterland in 1993. He remained there until 1998, when he assumed the same role for the Bedford City Schools.

Powers has been an active member of the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA), Ohio Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (OIAAA) and the Northeast Ohio Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NEOIAAA). His work as part of the NEOIAAA Executive Committee started in 1995, and he was president from 2009 to 2011. He also served as president of the OIAAA (2015-17), as a member of the OIAAA Strategic Plan Committee, and he has been a part of the OIAAA State Conference Committee for 10 years.

With the OHSAA, Powers served a term on the OHSAA Board of Directors and was president in 2017-18. He also was regional football playoff manager for 16 years.

A member of the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA) for more than 20 years, Powers attended his first National Athletic Directors Conference (NADC) in 2011 and has yet to miss one since. He has completed 34 Leadership Training Institute (LTI) courses. He has also served on the NIAAA Membership Committee.

Among his honors, Powers was a recipient of the NIAAA State Award of Merit in 2016, as well as the OIAAA Citation Award in 2012. In 2009, the NEOIAAA named him the Athletic Director of the Year. Powers has also received the OIAAA Distinguished Service Award Inside the Field of Athletics in 2007 and, in 2006, was voted the No. 1 athletic director by sportswriters in the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*.

Lanness Robinson, CMAA

Tampa, Florida

Although he is the director of athletics for one of the largest school districts in the nation, Lanness Robinson, CMAA, continues with his commitment to student-athletes as his first priority. Robinson, the director of athletics for Hillsborough County (Florida) Public Schools, started a scholarship program that annually awards a \$500 scholarship to one senior male and one senior female student-athlete from each Hillsborough County school. Since the program was launched, Robinson has secured sponsorships to fund more than \$330,000 in scholarship money.

Prior to taking his role with Hillsborough County Public Schools in 2006, Robinson served as the assistant principal and athletic director at Wharton High School in Tampa. That six-year stint followed his start at Plant City (Florida) High School as a teacher, head basketball coach and assistant football coach from 1995 to 2000.

Currently a member of the NIAAA Board of Directors, Robinson will be NIAAA president next year and will be a key member of the Host Committee for Tampa's first National Athletic Directors Conference in 2020.

Robinson has been a valuable member of the NIAAA Leadership Training Institute (LTI), serving as course chair since 2009. He has taken 37 LTI courses and presented 15 courses at several state and national conferences.

At the state level, Robinson has been on the Florida Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (FIAAA) Board of Directors since 2002 and was its president in 2010-11. He served on the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) Representative Assembly from 2004 to 2006, and was a member of the FHSAA Athletic Directors Advisory Committee for two years.

In 2015, Robinson received the Dr. Clarence Noe Outstanding Athletic Administrator of the Year award from the FIAAA, and he was the recipient of the NIAAA State Award of Merit in 2009. He has also been recognized by the Positive Coaching Alliance, which named him a National Leadership Fellow in 2015 and with its Tampa Bay Champion Award in 2014.

Fred Smith, CMAA

Stevensville, Michigan

Fred Smith, CMAA, was a passionate champion for Michigan interscholastic athletic administrators during his 38-year tenure as a teacher, coach and administrator. Smith's career spanned stops at four Michigan schools from 1980 until his retirement in 2017.

A 1979 graduate of Western Michigan University, Smith began his career at Lake Michigan Catholic Schools for 11 years. In 1991, he joined Comstock Public Schools in Kalamazoo, Michigan, where he served for 16 years. Smith move to Buchanan (Michigan) Community Schools in 2007, where he remained until 2015 before departing for his final stop as athletic director at Benton Harbor for two years.

Among his accomplishments, Smith instituted awards programs to recognize three-sport (or more) student-athletes who participated for their full, four-year high school career.

Additionally, he assisted with the development of an evaluation tool for coaches and helped provide funding for coaches to attend the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) Coaches' Advancement Program.

Smith was a member of the MHSAA Representative Council from 2005 to 2017, including the final four years as vice president. He also served on several MHSAA committees, and he

hosted countless MHSAA district and regional tournaments. With the Michigan Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (MIAAA), he has served as chair of its Professional Development Committee as well as a member of its executive board from 1993 to 1998.

Smith was a member of the NIAAA Board of Directors (1996-98), Credentials Committee (1989-96) and Hall of Fame Screening Committee (2010-18). He has been heavily involved in the NIAAA's Leadership Training Institute. He is national course chair for LTC 501, and he has presented Leadership Training Courses in 14 states. Smith also served on the NIAAA Executive Director Search Committee, and he has attended 34 National Athletic Directors Conferences.

Smith has been honored with numerous awards. He has previously received the NIAAA Distinguished Service Award, the NIAAA Thomas E. Frederick Award of Excellence, the NIAAA Frank Kovalski Professional Development Award, and the MHSAA Charles E. Forsythe Award.

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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 performing arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and performing 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 19,500 high schools and 12 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7.9 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; offers online publications and services for high school coaches and officials; sponsors professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, speech and debate coaches, and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS website at www.nfhs.org.

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