

Waconia High School Hall of Fame – Class of 2009

Class of 2009: Cynthia (Buetow) Kapke, Tom Gerding, Ronald Larson, Lloyd Laumann, Connie Manuel & Rochele (Goetz) Williams

Cynthia (Buetow) Kapke:

Cyndi was 1990 graduate of Waconia High School where she excelled as a three-sport athlete participating in volleyball, basketball and softball. During her four years of participation, Cyndi lettered four years in each of these three sports. She served as co-captain in all three sports her junior and senior years. In basketball Cyndi also achieved the 1000+ point milestone. Skilled, energetic, enthusiastic, and unselfish are words that would be used to characterize her athletic career. This demonstrated talent would make Cyndi the recipient of a Division I scholarship from the University of Maine.

Following her graduation from the University of Maine with a B.A. in Communications, Cyndi returned to Minnesota to begin her career. Working first in education in Waconia, Maplewood and Minneapolis, she has since turned her communication skills to business. She now works at G & K Services in Minnetonka as the Internal Communications Manager. Cyndi, her husband and three children reside in Edina.

Tom Gerding:

Tom is a 1997 graduate of Waconia High School where he excelled academically and athletically throughout his high school career. He was a member of the National Honor Society and earned 11 athletic letters at Waconia High School competing in basketball, cross country and track. A proven leader, he was elected captain of all three sports his senior year. Tom won three state titles in track & field, and is the current State Class A record holder in the 400 meter dash.

After graduating from Waconia High School, Tom attended the University of Minnesota on a track & field scholarship. In the spring of 2000, Tom earned the first of four All-American sprinting honors, becoming the first individual sprinter to earn All-American honors in the history of University of Minnesota Track & Field. Tom graduated in 2002 with a degree in Management and Finance. He continues to utilize his management and business training as Director of Finance & Compliance for Father Joe's Villages, a large charity in Southern California. His leadership skills are obvious on and off the job, as evidenced by his involvement in forming a young professionals group, entitled RISE (Reach, Inform, Support, Empower), and is co-founder of a running and social group in San Diego, which

has approximately 100 members. Tom is the son of Ken and Kathy Gerding of Waconia.

Lloyd Laumann:

Lloyd, a 1955 graduate of Waconia High School has led an interesting life, based seemingly on the adage, “when one door closes, another opens”. The first door for Lloyd was high school. While gaining an education, Lloyd was active, participating in football, track, band, drama, F.F.A., basketball, lettermen’s club, and student managing in baseball and football. When graduation closed the school door, Lloyd took employment at Tonka Toys while preparing to enter the U.S. Army. This one year of Tonka Toys employment would serve Lloyd well, for after completion of his military service in Korea, Lloyd returned to them. This period of time, Lloyd, through college classes, Tonka mentoring and own his effort, went from entry level assembler to Vice-President of Manufacturing. However, this very successful period of Lloyd’s life would close because of a serious heart condition.

Faced with a new door, Lloyd opened it, and since then has devoted over 25 years to volunteer service to the Waconia area. Lloyd has served St. Joseph’s Catholic Church and School as a volunteer coach, a trustee, a school board member, and as coordinator for various parish building projects. He has been awarded the Catholic Aid Association Community Service Award, the Waconia Knights of Columbus Family of the Year Award and the St. Joseph’s School Distinguished Graduate Award. For District 110, Lloyd has served on the Facilities Committee, the P.E.R. Committee and the Logo Committee, as well as volunteering to serve as a timer at cross country and track meets. Lloyd in this new phase of his life has become a warm, welcoming face of Waconia.

Lloyd has also co-authored a book Tonka, in 2004, and continues to write monthly for a nationally published toy collector magazine. Lloyd and his wife Jean will celebrate 47 years of marriage this year. They have two children, Ann & Gregg.

Connie Manuel:

Connie attended Bloomington Kennedy High School, where she excelled in athletics achieving the Athena Award her senior year. She attended St. Cloud State on track scholarship and graduated in 1980 with a Bachelor’s Degree in Education.

Connie started teaching and coaching for District 110 in 1988 and spent 20 years “touching the lives” of young people in a positive way. In 1989, she became the head volleyball coach. In 1990 she took her team to a state tournament and came away State Consolation Champions!! In 1997, she became the first woman ever to be a head coach of a varsity men’s sport at Waconia High School – she became the

head coach of the boys and girls track & field program. She continued coaching the co-ed varsity track & field program until 2007. Connie was the District's first certified athletic trainer, treating athletes' injuries and educating students in injury prevention.

Always an educator, the greatest lesson she left us with was how to live an active, purposeful life by managing adversity with humor.

Ron Larson:

Ron taught choral and general music in Minnesota for 34 years. In 1968, Ron moved to Waconia, where he taught vocal and general music for 30 years, until his retirement in 1998. In addition to directing several junior and senior high choirs, Ron directed WHS Musicals (25), Madrigal Singers, Chamber Singers, Pop Singers, Jazz Singers and Men's & Women's Ensembles. Under Ron's leadership, the WHS choirs consistently received superior ratings at Minnesota State High School League contests.

While living in Waconia, Ron directed an Adult church choir for 20 years and an intergenerational choir called "Young Believers" for 10 years, as well as served on the Church Council at Faith Lutheran Church. He also co-directed the Adult Community Theater in Waconia for 10 years and periodically directed an adult community choir. Ron received the American Choral Directors Association of Minnesota Choral Director of the Year Award in 1996. The following year, Ron was named the 1997 Minnesota Music Educators Association Music Educator of the Year. In 2002, Ron was inducted into the Minnesota Music Educators Association Hall of Fame.

Since retirement from teaching, Ron works part time at Klein Bank in Waconia, where he still enjoys seeing the people of the community. Ron, along with his wife Elaine, also coordinates and administers a student sponsorship program for students in El Salvador. They have traveled to El Salvador three times, building homes with Habitat for Humanity, International. Ron has been married to his wife Elaine for 44 years and they are proud parents of three children, Beth, Paul and Sara. Ron and Elaine find great pleasure in attending concerts and programs of their 8 grandchildren.

Rochele (Goetz) Williams:

A 1984 Waconia High School graduate, Rochele was the Valedictorian of her class and a three-sport standout student athlete. As an eighth-grader, Rochele was on the varsity golf team and proceeded to letter five years and was a state participant three years in a row, finishing in 7th place her senior year. She was a three-time All Conference selection in golf. Rochele was a four-year letter winner in basketball

where she was All Conference three years and had career high of 50 points against Hutchinson her senior year.

Volleyball was Rochele's game of choice where she was a member of Waconia High School's first-time State Participant team in 1982. She lettered four years and was a two-time All Conference selection. Rochele received a full-ride Division I Volleyball Scholarship to the University of Minnesota. As a MN Golden Gopher, she was a four-year letter winner and was named captain her senior year. Rochele as was also named to the Big Ten All Academic Team in 1986 and 1987. The highlight of Rochele's athletic career was when she received the 1988 Big Ten Medal of Honor – one of the Big Ten's oldest and most prestigious awards given each year to one male and one female athlete from each of the Big Ten schools for outstanding athletic and academic achievement.

Rochele lives in Waconia with her husband, Brian, and their three children, Danielle, Maxx and Makalya.