

**HASTINGS HIGH SCHOOL  
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION INC.**

**Est. 2000**

# **HALL OF EXCELLENCE**



**October 16, 2021**



**HHS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, INC.**  
**HHS HALL OF EXCELLENCE**

The HHS Hall of Excellence was formed under the umbrella of the Hastings High School Alumni Association and designed to recognize HHS graduates who have distinguished themselves in their field of work or study, their significant contributions in service to their community, and their dedication to lifelong learning. The first ceremony was held on October 17, 2009, with the induction of five outstanding HHS alumni, including two Nobel Prize winners.

The Hall of Excellence sets the standard for achievement and the HHS alumni selected for this distinction exemplify models of excellence, dedication and humanity. During the past decade, the fields of endeavor have remained broad and varied with the anticipation of inspiring HHS graduates of tomorrow to note the many paths that can be taken in life with the simple goal of being the best that one can be. We are hopeful HOE members offer inspiration and understanding about the value of education, citizenship and social responsibility and the opportunities to which it may lead.

Any HHS graduate may nominate a candidate they feel deserves to be considered for inclusion into the HHS Hall of Excellence. All candidates must be graduates of HHS, and the candidate's record should reflect positively on Hastings High School and its community.

The members of the HHSAA are extremely pleased to have the opportunity to honor our fellow HHS alumni and former classmates in this meaningful way.

**WELCOME**  
to the  
**HASTINGS HIGH SCHOOL**  
**ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, INC.**



**AWARD CEREMONY & BANQUET**

Hastings Southside Social & Athletic Club  
113 Southside Avenue  
Hastings-on-Hudson, New York 10706  
October 16, 2021  
6:00 - 10:00 p.m.

**PROGRAM**

Welcome  
Pledge of Allegiance  
Dinner  
Presentation of Awards  
Closing Remarks

Welcome to the 2021 HHS Hall of Excellence award ceremony.

Thank you for joining us this evening to celebrate the remarkable career accomplishments of this year's outstanding ensemble of Hastings High School alumni. In addition, we are proudly recognizing HHS alumni who have chosen a career serving on the Hastings-on-Hudson Police Department. Enjoy the evening!

*"A school without a past has no history." – Bernard "O-Bie" O'Brien \* '50*



**HHS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, INC.**

**HONORED MEMBERS OF THE  
HHS HALL OF EXCELLENCE**

- |                               |                              |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1943 - William P. Daley       | 1962 - F. John Adams*        |
| 1944 - Julius R. Chemka*      | 1963 - Jonathan F. Lillard   |
| 1945 - Donald P. Gregg        | 1963 - Jack E. McCallum      |
| 1950 - William H. Bohnert     | 1963 - Patricia Mehlhop      |
| 1950 - Bernard J. O'Brien*    | 1965 - Stephen Collins       |
| 1951 - Edmund "Ned" Phelps    | 1966 - Vanessa H. Merton     |
| 1951 - Julia Scott Maser*     | 1966 - Mary Koslap-Petraco   |
| 1951 - Donald Maricle         | 1968 - William Finkeldey     |
| 1953 - Ronald H. Jesberg      | 1969 - Jeanne Wester Newman  |
| 1953 - G. Michael Howard*     | 1975 - Steven M. Bass        |
| 1954 - Robert L. Guyett       | 1976 - Staton Rabin          |
| 1955 - Mitzi Mallina Wertheim | 1978 - Marian E. Porges      |
| 1956 - Thomas F. Pike         | 1981 - Andrew Michael Simon  |
| 1959 - Jeffrey M. Camhi       | 1986 - Laura Van Wie McGrory |
| 1959 - William H. Ewen Jr.    | 1986 - Philip J. Weiser      |
| 1959 - Robert H. Hirst        | 1990 - Andrew Berends*       |
| 1962 - Robert C. Merton       |                              |

\*Known Deceased

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."

– Eleanor Roosevelt

**HHS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, INC.  
HHS HALL OF EXCELLENCE**

**Award Presentation**

On behalf of the members of the Hastings High School Alumni Association, we commend each of you on your post high school career accomplishments and contributions.

Congratulations Inductees!

<b>INDUCTEE</b>	<b>PRESENTER</b>
Franklin A. Davis	Brian Davis '63
Sandra Gingras	Lisa Fell Labella '76
John Nyemchek	Andrew Ettinger '76
Maud Tucker	Maureen Bassman '80
John Melvin Jr	Gregory Localio '86
Lee R. Kaiser	Tino Rotiroti '87

HOE Special Recognition Award - 2021  
presented to  
Myrna Gulish '55

HOE Community Service Award - 2021  
presented to the  
Village of Hastings-on-Hudson Police Department

"The important thing is to find your true source of inspiration and to remain focused in the achievement of your goals." – *Sara Wellington*

**FRANKLIN A. DAVIS** – Class of 1958

Organic Chemist/Researcher/Professor

Nominated by Brian Davis '63

Brian wrote, "Siblings are not always the most unbiased sources of recommendations but I believe Frank's record of accomplishments remain today significant building blocks to the future of organic chemistry."



Frank has always had an avid curiosity about how things work and what they're made of. He found his niche and lifelong passion for chemistry as an undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin; and obtained his Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry at Syracuse University. After post-doctoral work at the University of Texas he achieved a professorship at Drexel University where he taught and did research for 27 years, obtaining funding from The National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation (among others) and was honored with a named professorship. He spent an additional 22 years at Temple University, teaching and continuing his research. Today he serves Temple as the Laura H. Carnell Professor of Chemistry Emeritus. Frank is recognized globally for his contributions to organic chemistry and has published over 300 research papers. He invented a unique class of compounds used by academia and industries alike. Today these compounds bear his name: "Davis Reagents". In 2006 Frank was awarded the prestigious John Scott Medal, an award also shared with such luminaries as Marie Curie, Thomas Edison, the Wright brothers, Edwin Land, Jonas Salk and many other ground-breaking scientists. He received the Arthur C. Cope Scholar Award (American Chemical Society) in 2006, was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry in 2008, and has received many other honors for his work.

Frank and his wife Lynne have 2 daughters and 3 grandchildren. No scientists yet! Frank is a lifelong tennis player and golfer and divides his time between homes in Pennsylvania and South Carolina.

**SANDRA GINGRAS** – Class of 1976

Author/Illustrator/Entrepreneur

Nominated by Lisa Fell Labella '76

Lisa said, "Sandy is highly deserving of this honor. She has created her unique personal brand while being involved in her community."



Sandy has a B.A. from Hamilton College (Summa Cum Laude, Phi Beta Kappa), an M.A. in English from Duke University and an M.A. from Rider University in Counseling. She's received many awards for her writing including winning the worldwide Crime Writer's Association Debut Dagger Award and also a N.J. State Council on the Arts Grant.

Sandy has a multi-decade career as a writer and illustrator of twenty-five gift books, which have sold close to a million copies. She has also published fiction, poetry and narrative non-fiction; and has a novel, *Paradise Girls*, coming out in 2022, which will be published by St. Martin's Press.

Sandy has designed hundreds of stationery and gift products for several national companies. She's created four businesses--a wholesale stationery business, a licensing business for her artwork, and two retail stores. She has been featured in national magazines: *HGTV*, *Coastal Living*; and *Where Women Create*.

Sandy also has a long history of volunteering for environmental causes, particularly saving wetlands. She has two grown sons, and lives with her husband and a rescue dog named Fisher, on Long Beach Island in New Jersey. She has a happy cottage on the bay, and she spends her days running her stores, walking on the beach, painting and writing her next novel.

**JOHN NYEMCHEK – Class of 1976**

Professional Ballroom Dancer/Teacher/Choreographer

Nominated by Andrew Ettinger '76

Andrew said, "The gift John has developed and shared with multitudes has brought joy and has simply made the world a better place."



John started dancing when he was just six years old – studying Tap, Jazz, and Ballroom. John and his dance partner, Cathi, (who later became his wife) were Junior American Style Champions, U.S. Amateur Champions and U.S. Professional 10 Dance Champions. They were chosen to represent the U.S. at World Amateur Championships and were part of a formation team sent to Poland as ambassadors. As Professional Champions they represented the U.S. in Japan, Germany, England, Holland and Canada. They were one of the founding teams of the American Ballroom Theatre and have performed on stage at the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, Herbst Theatre and the Brooklyn Academy of Music, to name just a few of the many venues.

John has been teaching dance since 1979 and has judged championships throughout the world. He is a registered world class adjudicator with the National Dance Council of America and the World DanceSport Council, a fellow and examiner for the NADTA and an examiner for the National Dance Council of America.

John and Cathi own and operate Nyemchek's Dance Centre in Pearl River, NY, where their students range from very young children to adults in their advancing years, and beginners to professionals. John shares his passion with everyone and has dedicated his free time to develop wheelchair partner dance. His motto is, "everyone can dance."

The dance champions celebrated 42 years of marriage in September 2021. They have four grown children and are proud first-time grandparents to a granddaughter born in 2018.



**MAUD TUCKER** – Class of 1980

Chef/Restaurateur

Nominated by Maureen Gunther Bassman '80

Maureen said, "Maud is a warm-hearted woman whose business acumen has been steadfast in an industry where many others have failed."



Maud is a graduate of the French Culinary Institute. Enjoying a career in the restaurant business for more than three decades, she gained her experience working in many fine restaurants, capping her rise to Sous Chef, at the world-renowned Plaza Athenee.

Maud knew from very early on that she wanted to operate her own restaurant. When the location on Southside Avenue in downtown Hastings-on-Hudson became available, she acquired the space with help from her family, and her dream of having a restaurant in the community where she grew-up became a reality.

As the chef, owner and operator, Maud has succeeded in making her namesake restaurant, *Maud's Tavern*, a neighborhood hot-spot for nearly three decades. Despite the challenges of last year and the difficult restraints put on restaurants due to the pandemic, this restaurateur and life-long resident of H-O-H has adapted and thrived – a combination of her determination, business acumen and resourcefulness.

When told of her nomination into the Hall of Excellence, Maud responded, "What a great honor. I feel very humbled."

**JOHN MELVIN JR** – Class of 1986  
Educational Leadership & Organizational Change

Nominated by Greg Localio '86

Greg wrote, "John is perpetually striving to better the lives of those he serves in his profession and in his community."



After graduating HHS, John attended Hamilton College in upstate New York. During his Junior Year, John studied abroad in India through the University of Wisconsin where he studied Hindi and lived for ten months in the ancient city of Varanasi – conducting a research project on economic and social change in rural villages.

After graduating Hamilton College with a major in Sociology, John moved to Washington, D.C. where he worked for several organizations in the field of international economic development. He returned to India to work for CARE International on a project promoting microenterprise development and later became the director of the Wisconsin University study abroad program in India. In 1996, John moved to the San Francisco Bay Area and continued his work in community development and education. He worked as a middle school History and English teacher in Oakland while earning his Masters Degree in Education from Mills College.

In 2009, he became a school principal after completing the national principal preparation program New Leaders for New Schools. In his first principalship, John led Lincoln Elementary School in Oakland to be recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School in 2010. He later completed his Doctorate of Education at UC Berkeley in 2017.

John now lives in Portland, Oregon, with his wife Sharon and children Tobias (age 8) and Lilah (age 5) continuing his work in education as Principal of James John Elementary School in North Portland.

**LEE R. KAISER** – Class of 1987

Teacher/Counselor/Mentor

Nominated by Tino Rotiroti '87

Tino said, "Lee thrives in supporting young people, helping others and building community. My good friend Lee exemplifies everything the HOE represents."



Lee attended SUNY Oswego, where he earned his Elementary Education degree. After college, from 1993-2000, Lee became a 6th grade teacher in Fairfax County, VA, where he was nominated as the Sallie Mae First Year Teacher of the Year. In 1999, he earned his Masters in Counseling and Development from George Mason University and was recognized as the Graduate Student of the Year. Lee transitioned into the role of elementary school counselor in 2001 and has been in that position for 21 years. He has initiated numerous programs that focus on supporting the positive development of young people while creating nurturing environments in which they can thrive. One noteworthy program that gained widespread recognition was his "Counseling-in-Motion" program. Throughout Lee's teaching career he has received many commendations and awards.

In 2020, Lee was elected to the Virginia School Counselors Association Board of Directors, where he advocates for excellence in school counseling and collaborates with legislatures on current policy. He believes in volunteerism through coaching youth sports, presenting for the Fairfax County Public School's Speakers Bureau, and serving on the PTA.

Lee resides in Centreville, VA with his wife, Nadine and three daughters, Zoe, Carson and Lindsey. He has always credited Hastings as having a significant impact on his life. He wrote, "I'm a proud HHS alum and I'm appreciative, honored and humbled to be selected for induction into the HHS Hall of Excellence."

**HHS HALL OF EXCELLENCE  
SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARD – 2021**

presented to

**MYRNA GULISH** – Class of 1955



Reliable, enthusiastic and tireless...just a few ways to describe HHSAA board member, Myrna Gulish. This dynamic HHS alum has been a powerhouse since joining the Board of Directors in 2008.

Myrna's love of school and community is applied in all she does and bolstering the HHSAA has been her mission. Myrna has worn many hats during her tenure with the HHSAA. In 2008, she was chosen to spearhead the newly-formed Class Representatives Program and has succeeded in maintaining representation for more than 30 graduated classes – while keeping an ongoing exchange and relationship with more than 60 class delegates. In 2011, Myrna became Chair of the HHS Hall of Excellence. From soliciting and vetting prospective candidates and organizing selection committee members, she has meticulously managed the HOE ceremony and banquet down to the very last detail.

Myrna is hometown proud – always seeking ways to highlight the accomplishments and service of fellow HHS alumni. She started the HHS Alumni Authors series in 2016 to showcase published alumni; and paid tribute to HHS grads that have chosen to serve the H-O-H community as police officers and firefighters. In her desire to Pay It Forward, in 2013 Myrna with her two siblings established the *Gulish Family Art Scholarship*. Since that time, they have generously awarded an annual \$1,500 scholarship to an HHS senior pursuing a career in the arts.

Myrna is stepping down as HOE Chairperson at the end of 2021. Her successor will have big shoes to fill. The HHSAA owes a debt of gratitude to this spunky spitfire for her commitment to growing the HHSAA, keeping HHS alumni connected and supporting future generations of HHS graduates. THANK YOU, MYRNA...you are truly one-of-a-kind! Don't go too far...the organization will certainly find yet another "hat" for you to wear.

**HHS HALL OF EXCELLENCE  
COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD  
2021**



Presented to past & present members of the  
**VILLAGE OF HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON  
POLICE DEPARTMENT**

The HHSAA is proud to recognize HHS alumni who have devoted their career to serve and protect the Hastings-on-Hudson community and its citizens. We applaud your service and duty.

1950- George Usher*	1986- Stuart Cohen*
1953- William Ramsey	1986- Brian Pietropaolo
1955- Frank DeSouza*	1989- John Danahy
1959- Joseph Marsic	1989- Dennis Dzubak
1959- John "Boots" Knapp*	1992- Donald Pavone
1960- Paul Kazura*	1996- Sean Ryan
1960- Karl "Corky" Soderstrom	1997- Thomas O'Sullivan Jr
1969- Stephen Cuppek Jr	1997- Christopher Sorano
1969- Kenneth Senita	2000- Robert Gagliardi
1970- Robert Russak	2003- Justin Bottiglieri
1973- Glenn Bazzano	2006- Kevin Barry
1973- Richard "Ricky" White	2008- Michael Pacheco
1975- Jeffrey Disch*	2009- Robert Simmonds
1979- John DeBlasio	2010- Peter Meyers
1982- Anthony Cuomo	2011- Joseph Borelli
1982- Anthony Visalli	2011- Sam Brecker
1983- Edward Usher	2011- Brandon King
1985- David Dosin	
1985- Andrew Hayden	

\*Known Deceased

PLEASE NOTE: If an HHS graduate was inadvertently omitted from the list please contact Myrna Gulish at: [myrnagulish55@gmail.com](mailto:myrnagulish55@gmail.com)

"For a community to be whole and healthy, it must be based on people's love and concern for each other." – *Millard Fuller*

**HASTINGS HIGH SCHOOL  
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, INC.**

Est. 2000

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS – 2021**

Patricia Chemka Speranza '76 – President  
Lorraine Johnson Usher '65 – Vice President  
Myrna Gulish '55 – Class Representatives Coordinator  
Hall of Excellence Chairperson  
Stan Madyda '73 – Secretary  
William Kennedy '85 – Treasurer  
Nancy Maleska '72 – Hall of Fame Chairperson  
Alan Fine '75 – Director, Special Events  
Rafael Zaratzian '83 – Director, Website/Technical  
Connie Gulish Bliss '56 – Director  
Joan Farrell Lee '56 – Director  
Nancy Skultety Gagliardi '75 – HHS Liaison  
Eric Kantor '58 – Director  
Gregory Localio '86 – Director  
Jessica Black Puozzoli '00 – Director

**HALL OF EXCELLENCE  
SELECTION COMMITTEE – 2021**

Myrna Gulish '55 – Chairperson

Paul Perreten '51 CLASS REP	Richard Tom '54 CLASS REP
Connie Gulish Bliss '56 CLASS REP	Linda Rosiello Conte '58 CLASS REP
Vanessa Merton '66 HOE MEMBER – 2019	Donna Drumm '78 CLASS REP

“To become successful, one must put themselves in the paths of giants.”  
– *Lillian Caudwell*

Dear Fellow HHS Alumni and Friends,

The Hastings High School Alumni Association (HHSAA) is a tax exempt charitable organization incorporated under the New York State Not-For-Profit Corporation Law. The all-volunteer organization is supported wholly by annual dues and generous donations from our alumni members and friends.

Our mission is multi-faceted. We provide a means for all HHS alumni to stay connected, recognize outstanding former HHS athletes and coaches through the RONALD W. LINDEMANN ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME, acknowledge the post high school successes of HHS grads through the HALL OF XCELLENCE, and Pay It Forward to HHS graduates of tomorrow through the HHSAA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM. Every cent of the money we receive is funneled into these many efforts, and more. This past June, the HHSAA presented 16 scholarships totaling \$23,500 to HHS seniors continuing their education post high school. Having experienced the most tumultuous and challenging past year in our collective memory – we could not be more proud of the way our alumni family stepped up to safeguard the scholarship award program and allow us to carry on our objective without a hitch!

This year we've been “challenged” to raise \$50,000, which will be equally matched, to enable us to create an endowment for our scholarship goal. With your help – we will achieve that goal!

If you are not already an HHSAA member, please consider joining and lend a hand in keeping up the winning traditions of HHS.

Thank you for being a part of this special evening. Congratulations to our newest HOE members and a great big round of applause to everyone who had a hand in making this event possible.

We hope to see you again in 2023 – at the next HOE induction ceremony.

**STAY CONNECTED!**

The HHS EXPERIENCE LASTS A LIFETIME.

Visit our website at: [www.hohalumni.org](http://www.hohalumni.org) to learn more about the HHSAA – its mission, membership and scholarship program.

“In helping others, we shall help ourselves, for whatever good we give out completes the circle and comes back to us.” – *Flora Edwards*

Hastings High School  
**ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, INC.**

**HALL OF EXCELLENCE**  **HALL OF FAME**

c/o 1 Mt. Hope Blvd.  
Hastings-on-Hudson, New York 10706

Visit our website at: **[www.hohalumni.org](http://www.hohalumni.org)**  
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