



North Cedar Community School District
ALUMNI AWARDS

Alumni Awards honor graduates of North Cedar High School or one of the former districts that now make up North Cedar. Awards are given to alums in recognition of their professional achievements, service to non-profits, community impact, fine arts accomplishments and/or athletic excellence. Nominees are reviewed and recipients are selected by a committee made up of school and community representatives.

Alumni Community Impact Award
Roger Freese

Roger Freese, a 1962 graduate of Clarence High School, was a lifelong resident and active member of the Clarence community. Graduating as salutatorian, he earned a bachelor's degree in industrial administration from Iowa



State University in 1966 and a law degree with high honors from the University of Iowa in 1968. He returned to Clarence to practice law and became active in local organizations, including the Clarence and Lowden Commercial Clubs, serving

as president of the Clarence club.

In 1971, Roger became involved in the consolidation of the Clarence-Lowden Community School District. He served on the school board from 1974 to 1985, holding roles as president and vice president, and later joined the district's advisory committee.

Appointed as a Cedar County magistrate judge in 1973, Roger served until his passing, becoming the longest-serving magistrate in Iowa at that time. He was also president of the Cedar County Bar Association and an active member of the Iowa State Bar Association.

In 1990, Roger was a founding member of the Clarence Area Economic Development Group, serving as its president. Under his leadership, the group facilitated projects such as establishing an industrial park and driving community revitalization efforts. These

achievements earned the group the Community Economic Preparedness Award.

Affected by a neuromuscular disease, Roger became a strong advocate for individuals with disabilities. He served on the founding board of the Cedar County Workshop, the advisory committee for the Tipton Group Home, and Cedar County ARC. The Eastern Iowa chapter of the Muscular Dystrophy Association recognized his efforts with an achievement award in 2002.

Roger also served on the Clarence Park Board, organized community celebrations, and contributed to projects like the development of Raymond Conrad Memorial Park.

Roger's life was marked by dedication to his family, career, and community. He passed away in 2003, one day after his 59th birthday, leaving behind his wife, Mary, and their two sons, Eric and Paul. His contributions continue to resonate throughout the Clarence area.

Alumni Achievement Award
Julayne Hoffmeier

Julayne "Jo" Hoffmeier, a 1967 graduate of Lowden High School, has built a distinguished career in education, leadership, and community service. At Lowden, she participated in music, drama, and athletics, earning four varsity letters in basketball, softball, and music.

Julayne earned a Bachelor of Arts in Education/Physical Education from the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) in 1971, followed by a Master of Arts in Secondary Education Administration in 1976. As a UNI undergraduate, she was a member of the inaugural interscholastic field hockey and basketball teams.

Her early career included teaching and coaching at St. Ansgar High School, where she

introduced and implemented girls' athletic programs. In 1975, she was named Teacher and Coach of the Year. Julayne later transitioned to administration, serving as one of Iowa's first female high school principals at Allison-Bristow High School and then at Red Oak Junior High.



In 1981, she began working in healthcare administration, including roles as Executive Vice President for Medicare Equipment Services and director of the Los Angeles branch of Norrell Health Care.

She returned to education in 1988 with the University of Phoenix, where she held leadership roles for over two decades. Julayne was instrumental in establishing the Sacramento campus, overseeing operations for Northern California and Oregon, and serving as Western Region Vice-President of Community Relations and Project Strategy.

Since retiring in 2011, she has remained active in her community. She revised the Elk Grove Chamber of Commerce Leadership Program, serves on advisory boards, including the California NorthState University Nursing Program and the Sacramento Area Rainbow Faith Alliance, and holds leadership roles at St. John's Lutheran Church.

Julayne resides in Elk Grove, California, with her wife, Carolynn. They enjoy spending time with family and friends, traveling to explore many countries, and sharing her lifelong passion for sports.

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2024-25 Alumni Award Recipients

Alumni Community Impact Award

Roger Freese

Alumni Achievement Award

Julayne Hoffmeier

Alumni Achievement Award

Stephen Pingel

Alumni Athletics Award

Kris Plueger

Alumni Athletics Award

Eleanor Wenndt

Alumni Achievement Award

Stephen Pingel

Stephen Pingel, a 1965 graduate of Lowden High School, has built a distinguished career in aviation and public service. As a Go-Hawk, he competed in baseball and track. After high school, he earned a degree in aerospace engineering from Iowa State University and a commission in the U.S. Air Force in 1969.



He served as an F-4 fighter pilot with deployments to Vietnam, Thailand, Okinawa, and

Europe. While assigned to the Air Staff at the Pentagon, he coordinated contingency operations for the Air Force, including the 1986 airstrike on terrorist camps in Libya. At Seymour Johnson AFB in North Carolina, he commanded an F-15E squadron deployed to Saudi Arabia during Desert Shield and Desert Storm, where his team destroyed 46 enemy aircraft

on the ground and one in the air. He later served as the 3rd Air Force Director of Operations at RAF Mildenhall, directed humanitarian relief efforts in northern Iraq, and concluded his military service as Vice Commander of the 4th Fighter Wing at Seymour Johnson AFB.

Over his career, Stephen logged 4,500 flight hours and completed 283 combat missions, earning numerous honors, including two Distinguished Flying Crosses. He retired as a colonel in 1997.

Following his military career, Stephen joined Boeing in North Carolina and later St. Louis as an F-15E instructor and test pilot, helping international air forces integrate the aircraft into their fleets. He retired in 2010 as lead test engineer for the F-15E mission trainer.

In 2015, Stephen and his wife, Linda, returned to North Carolina to be closer to their four children and grandchildren. He has served as president of the Three Eagles Rotary Club and the Goldsboro chapter of the Air Force Association, as well as a member of the Goldsboro-Wayne Airport Authority. At Oakland Presbyterian Church, he serves as an elder and finance officer.

Stephen remains dedicated to service and leadership, supporting his community and various organizations.

Alumni Athletics Award

Kris Plueger

A 1969 graduate of Lincoln High School, Kris (Meyer) Plueger excelled in basketball, softball, and track and field, earning 14 varsity letters. She scored over 1,300 points in basketball, receiving All-State Honorable Mention in 1968 and 1969.



In softball, she led her team to back-to-back conference titles as a shortstop. In track, she helped her team secure a conference championship, participated in two state-qualifying relays, and achieved three top-five finishes in the state softball throw, including a runner-up finish in 1969.

At the University of Northern Iowa (UNI), Kris played basketball, softball, and field hockey while advocating for equity in women's athletics. She captained the basketball team her

senior year and helped UNI's inaugural softball team earn a spot in the Women's College World Series, leading the tournament in batting average. Graduating with a degree in physical education in 1973, she inspired advancements in women's sports through her advocacy.

Kris returned to Lincoln as a volleyball coach, leading the team to two conference titles. In 1982, she became a registered volleyball official, officiating 21 Iowa state tournaments, including seven finals. Her contribution earned her the 2001 the National Federation Officials Iowa Volleyball Official of the Year Award and induction into the Iowa Girls Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 2012.

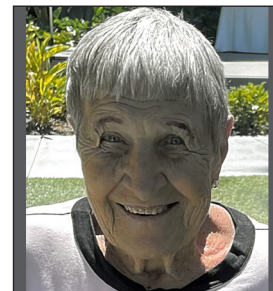
Kris continues her love of sports through golf, winning 16 club championships. A committed community member in Clarence, she has contributed to numerous civic projects, including organizing beautification efforts, coordinating community celebrations, and coaching many local youth sports. The Clarence Area Economic Development Group honored her as Volunteer of the Year in 2016.

Kris and her husband, Bob, currently split their time between Clarence and Arizona, enjoying family time with their children, Nick and Noelle, and their families.

Alumni Athletics Award

Eleanor Wenndt

Eleanor "Ellie" (Licht) Wenndt, a 1956 graduate of Lowden High School, was one of Iowa's standout athletes in six-on-six girls' basketball. She grew up on a farm south of Lowden spending many hours shooting at the basket



on the corn crib.

A four-year varsity player, she scored 3,855 career points across 118 games, ranking second in state history for career scoring at the time of her graduation. She led the Go-Hawks

to a 1955 state tournament appearance. As a senior, she averaged 40 points per game and achieved a career-high of 60 points in a single game against Stanwood. She earned first-team All-Wapsi Conference honors for three years, received Des Moines Register All-State honors in her junior and senior seasons and was named to the All-State Honor Roll.

After graduating, Eleanor remained active in basketball and community sports. She played for the Bettendorf Merchettes in the Quaker Oats Girls' Basketball League and later played in and organized a women's six-on-six basketball league in Cedar Rapids, providing opportunities for former all-state players to compete.

Eleanor was also a softball standout, playing, coaching, and umpiring in Cedar Rapids until she was 65. She coached girls' basketball and softball at Trinity Lutheran School in Cedar Rapids for 37 years and led the statistics team for the Iowa Cornets, a professional women's basketball team. Additionally, she coached youth softball and basketball and spent time coaching at Springville and Cedar Rapids Jefferson High Schools. She also participated in a bowling league for many years.

Her lasting impact on athletics was recognized with induction into the Cedar Rapids Softball Hall of Fame and the Cedar Rapids Jefferson Booster Club Hall of Fame.

Eleanor resides in Cedar Rapids and enjoys time with her children, Cindy and Sharm, and her grandchildren.

**THANK YOU to the
North Cedar
Education Foundation
for financially supporting
the Alumni Awards and
Reception.**



**Applications for the 2025-26 North Cedar Alumni Awards
are due Sept. 15, 2025.**

The nomination form is available at www.north-cedar.org