

Athletic Hall of Fame Induction

Coventry Athletic Hall of Fame ready to welcome six more



File photo

Coventry High will induct six more alumni into its Athletic Hall of Fame tomorrow night.

Legendary wrestling coach among half-dozen to be honored Saturday

JESSICA BOISCLAIR
jboisclair@ricentral.com

COVENTRY— The Coventry School Department will be hosting their second annual Induction Ceremony this Saturday to welcome six new candidates into their recently created Athletic Hall of Fame.

The hall of fame was first established in November of 2011 by Athletic Director Chuck Jones and Assistant Athletic Director Joe Fagnoli. They brought their proposal in front of the school committee who thought it was a “great idea” and the first ceremony was held a year later.

“I decided to create the hall of fame because there wasn’t one here,” laughed Jones. “There are so many outstanding athletes here so when I began as the Athletic Director it was one of the three main things I hoped to do; along with the support of the administration, the school committee and the assistant athletic director we were able to make it happen.”

Jones explained that the first annual ceremony, held in January last year, went “excellent,” bringing in more than 165 people to the Quidnessett Country Club in North Kingstown.

So far, approximately 100 people have registered for this year’s dinner, but Jones said tickets

are still available.

This year, six individuals from the community were nominated and inducted into the hall of fame, including Milton Biros, Douglas K. Hopper, Gary Hudson, Kathleen Carley Skwara, Robert Smith and Ted Szymkowicz.

Milton Biros, who passed away, was a 1954 graduate of Coventry High who devoted his life to Coventry athletics. He was a scorer, statistician, booster and writer who offered his services to the former Athletic Director C. Arthur Flori while

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working in the sports department at the newspaper.

Douglas Hopper attended Coventry High School from 1948-1951 and during those years he played varsity football, basketball and baseball. He was awarded All-League Honors in 1950 and 1951 for baseball and basketball. He went on to teach, coach and direct athletics for nineteen years in Coventry. He coached baseball and won Coventry's first baseball championship in 1961.

Gary Hudson was a 1969 graduate of Coventry High School and was all-state in football, wrestling and track and field. He was named All New England in wrestling his senior year and went on to play football at Boston College. Hudson played a season with the New England Colonials of the Atlantic Conference League and on Jan. 30, 1974 he was drafted by the New England Patriots.

Kathleen Carley Skwara was a 1984 graduate of Coventry High School and the first female inducted into the Coventry Athletic Hall of Fame. Along with ranking fourth in her class, she was captain of the tennis, basketball and softball teams. She received all division in both tennis and track and field and was named to the

all-state basketball team her senior year. She went on to play basketball at Yale.

Robert Smith is a 1964 graduate of North Kingstown High School who went on to teach at Coventry High School after graduating from the University of Rhode Island. He was the assistant and head wrestling coach at Coventry from 1972-1976 and 1991-1998.

During his time as coach, the team won 21 league championships, 19 state championships and four New England championships. After retiring, Smith continued to coach at Rhode Island College as an assistant for 11 years.

Ted Szymkowicz graduated from Coventry High School in 1955 after playing baseball, basketball and cross-country during his time there. He attended Alliance College and played baseball, basketball and golf. Szymkowicz returned to Coventry High School in 1962 as an educator, coach and athletic director. He was the assistant and head coach for the boy's basketball team, winning the Suburban Division State Championships in 1979-1980.

Jones said the nomination process begins on Jan. 1 of the previous year and closes on June 30. Once those nominations are in, the committee will choose the best candidates to be inducted into the hall

of fame. This year, he said, they had a total of 15 nominations and only six were chosen.

According to the nomination form, the purpose of inducting these residents is to "honor and perpetuate the memory of athletes, teams, coaches, and/or administrators who have graduated from Coventry High School."

There are five categories a person can be inducted for, including individual athletes who graduated more than five years ago, a team, coaches, administrators and the Red and White award.

To be inducted as a recipient of the Red and White Award, the person is not required to be a Coventry High School graduate but must have made a "significant" contribution to athletics in town.

This year's induction ceremony will be held on Saturday, Jan. 25 at Quidnessett Country Club, 950 North Quidnessett Road, North Kingstown at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$35 per person and must be purchased ahead of time.

Jones said anybody wanting to purchase a ticket may contact the Athletic Department today, Friday, at 822-9499 ext. 163 or through email at joneschuck@coventryschools.net or fargnolijoseph@coventryschools.net.