



2nd Annual
Celebration
of Excellence

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Double Tree Hotel
Bloomington



IESA Celebration of Excellence

The IESA Celebration of Excellence provides an opportunity for the association to express gratitude and recognize a select group of extraordinary individuals. These dedicated individuals have made significant contributions to their activities in partnership with the association, leaving a lasting impact.

The IESA Celebration of Excellence honors and recognizes Scholar Attitude Award Winners, Performing Arts Coaches, Division Sportsmanship Winners, 20+ Year State Officials, Scholastic Bowl Coaches, Show Your Spirit Award Winners, and recipients of the IESA Excellence Award and Friends of the IESA Award .

The association is proud to honor individuals who have demonstrated outstanding success in the classroom and shown leadership in their communities. We recognize those who exemplify sportsmanship, maintain longevity in their activities, achieve elevated performances, and foster lifelong friendships with the IESA. This event celebrates their remarkable contributions and achievements.



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Schedule of Events

12:00 - 12:30 pm	Arrival of Guests
12:35 pm	Scholar Attitude Award Winner Group Picture
1:00 pm	Welcome: Emcee, Dick Luedke National Anthem, Performed by Macy McClure and Avery Lane from Chiddix Junior High School Opening Remarks: Tony Ingold, Board of Directors President
1:10 pm	Scholar Attitude Awards - Divisions A - E 20-Year State Official Awards Scholar Attitude Awards - Divisions F - J
1:45 pm	IESA Thank You and Appreciation: Nicole Schaeftbauer, Executive Director
1:50 pm	Fine Arts Awards Scholar Attitude Awards - Divisions K - O Excellence & Friends of the IESA Awards
2:25 pm	Division Sportsmanship Awards Show Your Spirit Award
2:50 pm	Closing

Scholar Attitude Award

The IESA Scholar Attitude Award honors those students who have maintained a high-academic standard while pursuing participation in their school community through IESA activities.

A panel of judges consisting of coaches, athletic directors, principals, and officials, reviewed the applications and selected students representing all 15 IESA divisions.

To be considered, a student from an IESA member school must:

- Be of 8th grade status
- Have a minimum grade point average of 3.5 on a 4.0 scale
- Participate in at least one IESA activity during each year of their two-year junior high career
- Demonstrate outstanding citizenship during their junior high tenure -AND-
- Submit an essay titled "The Value of Sportsmanship and the Lessons I have Learned from Participating in Athletics and Activities"

We congratulate the selected students on their focus, passion, and pursuit. We look forward to the leadership they will provide in the future, and we are pleased to be a part of their journey!



Scholar Attitude Award

DIVISION A



**LARISSA
ZADEREJ**

BARRINGTON
ST. ANNE

PRINCIPAL:
DAWN KAPKA

As an accomplished student and an admired member of her St. Anne community, Larissa is known for her dedication and leadership. She has been an active participant in the Student Leadership Commission for four years, where she exemplifies the qualities of a supportive and positive leader.

Her most notable achievement is winning a gold medal at the Illinois Junior Academy of Science, where her project earned top honors

at local, regional, and state levels, highlighting her commitment to hard work and her ability to overcome challenges. Larissa's vision for a more understanding world, reflects her empathetic nature and desire to make a difference. As she prepares for high school, Larissa carries with her the strong foundation and values instilled by her St. Anne family, ready to embrace new challenges with courage and grace.

Molly is a dedicated and inspiring student at Jordan Catholic, known for her commitment to personal growth and leadership. As Student Council President, she has made a significant impact by collaborating with peers to foster a positive school environment and serving as a role model for younger students. Molly values the encouragement from her teachers and the unwavering support of her friends, which motivates her daily.

Her involvement in sports has contributed to her development as a well-rounded individual, strengthening her relationships and character. Molly holds a strong belief in the power of kindness and empathy, aspiring to make the world a more compassionate place. She embodies leadership by uplifting those around her, listening to diverse perspectives, and bravely standing up for what is right.

DIVISION B



**MOLLY
SHORT**

ROCK ISLAND
JORDAN
CATHOLIC

PRINCIPAL:
KELLY MCCLAUGHLIN

Scholar Attitude Award

DIVISION C



**SAVANNAH
JONES**

LA GRANGE
ST. CLETUS

PRINCIPAL:
GREG POROD

Savannah is a diligent and kindhearted young woman whose journey at St. Cletus has been marked by personal growth and a strong sense of community. Joining the school in fourth grade, she quickly forged meaningful friendships and embraced the vibrant community spirit. Her participation in sports has not only strengthened her bonds with peers but also enhanced her teamwork and leadership skills.

Savannah is most proud of her personal development, recognizing her growth in faith, knowledge, and social interactions. A hard worker, she consistently strives to be her best self, driven by a deep-seated desire to make a positive impact. With a heart for peace, Savannah dreams of ending war, aspiring to create a safer, more harmonious world for all.

DIVISION D



**BRYNA
SNOW**

SHOREWOOD
HOLY FAMILY

PRINCIPAL:
ANTHONY WILKINSON

Bryna has been a cherished member of Holy Family School since preschool, where she has cultivated strong bonds with her teachers and classmates, growing in both leadership and faith. Her dedication and perseverance are exemplified by her impressive achievement of advancing to the state level in cross country for two consecutive years, despite it not being a sport she initially favored.

Bryna believes that a hard-working and dedicated leader is key to a team's success, and she embodies this through her proactive approach, whether it's leading stretches or supporting her teammates. Passionate about equality, Bryna aspires to ensure that all children have equal access to sports, recognizing the pivotal role her own opportunities and supportive community have played in her journey.

Scholar Attitude Award

DIVISION E



**JAXON
RZASA**
STREATOR
NORTHLAWN

PRINCIPAL:
KAREN BRENNAN

Jaxon is a committed student and promising athlete known for his tenacity both in the classroom and on the baseball field. At his school, Jaxon appreciates the supportive and caring environment fostered by his teachers, particularly Mr. Byrne and Ms. Goins, who inspire him to excel academically.

Despite his shy nature, Jaxon thrives in sports, especially baseball, where he has transformed from a hesitant player to a confident athlete with a .625 batting average. His perseverance earned him a spot on the Streator Stingers and an invitation to a prestigious camp at the University of Richmond. Jaxon is also an empathetic individual who strives to combat bullying and promote peace, often standing up for others and embodying the true spirit of leadership through encouragement and teamwork.

Compassionate and driven, Matt is celebrated for his commitment to community service. As a student at St. Mark, he has twice been honored with the prestigious Christian Leadership Award, a testament to his dedication to doing the right thing without expecting praise and embodies the spirit of a true leader.

Matt's love for diversity and learning about different cultures has shaped him into a well-rounded person who embraces inclusiveness. His volunteer work at a local food pantry during summer breaks has instilled a deep sense of empathy and purpose, driving his ambition to ensure everyone has access to healthcare, clean water, food, and shelter. Matt values the power of collective leadership and draws inspiration from his sister and grandfather to make a positive impact in the world.

DIVISION F



**MATT
SKINNER**
PEORIA ST. MARK

PRINCIPAL:
TIM DOTSON

Scholar Attitude Award

DIVISION G



**EVELYN
BONVALLET**
HERSCHER LIMESTONE

PRINCIPAL:
MICHELLE CHAVERS

Dynamic and talented, Evelyn has thrived both academically and personally through her passion for music and athletics. An accomplished performer on the viola, she achieved the remarkable feat of participating in the District 3 ILMEA Music Festival. Evelyn's commitment to excellence is evident in her rigorous preparation and successful audition for this prestigious event.

Beyond her musical pursuits, she is an integral member of her school's basketball team, where she fosters camaraderie and teamwork. Evelyn's deep appreciation for her community and school environment highlights her gratitude for the opportunities that have shaped her. With a keen sense of leadership, she aspires to create equitable opportunities for all, believing that access to resources can unlock human potential and drive societal progress.

Halle is an inspiring student-athlete at Lexington Junior High. Embracing the "Purple Pride" of her small-town school, Halle appreciates the friendly environment where teachers genuinely care and invest in their students' growth both in and out of the classroom.

Her dedication to athletics is matched by her commitment to character, exemplified by receiving the prestigious IESA Sportsmanship

Pin for basketball and softball, a testament to her belief in being a kind and respectful teammate. Halle's leadership philosophy centers on inclusivity, trust, and collaboration, qualities she embodies daily. Beyond personal achievements, Halle's caring nature is reflected in her desire to ensure everyone has access to basic needs, showcasing her empathy and drive to make a positive impact on the world.

DIVISION H



**HALLE
MCCLURE**
LEXINGTON

PRINCIPAL:
JENNIFER MCCOY



Scholar Attitude Award

DIVISION I



**CARSON
GRAUE**

LINCOLN CARROLL
CATHOLIC

PRINCIPAL:
DAVID WELCH

Carson is a dedicated and compassionate young individual known for his leadership, athletic talent, and community spirit. Growing up in a small, close-knit community, Carson has consistently demonstrated a willingness to help others, as exemplified by his involvement in fundraising efforts for a family affected by an apartment fire.

His passion for baseball has been a lifelong journey, culminating in an invitation to the

prestigious All-State Skills Showcase, a testament to his hard work and skill as a pitcher. Carson's leadership extends beyond sports, as he is committed to fostering kindness and inclusion, advocating for a world where everyone feels valued and respected. His dedication to encouraging others and setting a positive example reflects his belief in the power of kindness and perseverance.

DIVISION J



**MARRYN
FERGUSON**

BUSHNELL-PRAIRIE
CITY

PRINCIPAL:
BILL KNOWLES

Marryn thrives in the friendly culture of her small school, where she benefits from a strong support system and dedicated teachers who foster personal connections. A passionate athlete, Marryn has achieved remarkable success in track, winning two events at the state meet and securing third place in two others, a testament to her dedication and perseverance.

Beyond athletics, Marryn is an advocate for the importance of play in childhood development, believing that swing sets are essential for teaching balance, coordination, and social skills. Her understanding of leadership is shaped by mentors like her cheer coach and youth leader, who exemplify guidance and genuine care. Marryn is committed to fostering a supportive and inclusive community.



Scholar Attitude Award

DIVISION K



**AVERY
HUMPHREY**

RANTOUL ST. MALACHY

PRINCIPAL:
JENNIFER FOX

Avery is an ambitious and driven student at St. Malachy School, recognized for her outstanding achievements in both academics and athletics. She thrives in the supportive environment of her school, where she excels with the encouragement of her teachers.

Her enthusiasm for sports has sharpened her leadership abilities, enabling her to lead by example and inspire team spirit. Avery's athletic talent is showcased through her

impressive feat of breaking two track records in one season, overcoming a knee injury to reach the state level in hurdles and the 400-meter dash. Beyond her personal successes, Avery is actively involved in her community, participating in various charitable activities. Her vision to make a global impact is motivated by a desire to alleviate suffering worldwide.

DIVISION L



**HELLIE
BARRETT**

PARIS MAYO

PRINCIPAL:
CASEY PINNELL

Hellie is a driven individual, excelling both academically and athletically. Her love for learning is complemented by active participation in extracurriculars, supported by her teachers and peers. Beyond academics, Hellie is deeply involved in her community, volunteering in various activities like concession stands and cleanup projects.

Her standout achievement is in pole vaulting, where she quickly mastered the sport, broke her school record and earned third place at the IESA state track meet. Guided by a dedicated coach, she continues to hone her skills, aiming to return to state competition. Hellie's empathy and leadership are evident in her belief in kindness and her ability to inspire others. Her dedication to personal growth and community impact is truly inspiring.



Scholar Attitude Award

DIVISION M



**JESSE
AWATOR**

SPRINGFIELD
LINCOLN

PRINCIPAL:
NICHOLE HEYEN

Devoted and committed, Jesse thrives on collaboration, and personal growth. As a student actively involved in sports and clubs, he has cultivated communication and leadership skills through the AVID and BETA programs, contributing to his school's recognition as a National Demonstration Site.

Jesse's crowning achievement is winning the state championship in long jump, evidence of his perseverance and growth as a person and

an athlete. This success has shaped his approach to challenges, emphasizing the importance of discipline and commitment. Beyond personal accomplishments, Jesse champions kindness, acceptance, and respect, aspiring to create a world where differences are celebrated. His leadership philosophy centers on inspiring others through integrity and a shared vision for success.

Josie is a committed student and athlete at St. Thomas, recognized for her leadership abilities and community involvement. Since joining the cross-country team in 6th grade, she has made impressive strides, reducing her race times and earning medals in competitions. Despite the challenges of competitive sectionals, Josie has embraced valuable lessons in perseverance and humility.

Beyond her athletic accomplishments, Josie excels in leadership roles at her school, such as mentoring kindergarten buddies and organizing successful fundraising events. Her aspirations reach beyond her immediate surroundings, dreaming of a world where a cure for cancer brings peace and relief to families globally. Josie's sportsmanship and positive influence inspire her peers, highlighting her role as a true leader.

DIVISION N



**JOSIE
VOGT**

NEWTON
ST. THOMAS

PRINCIPAL:
JILL BIERMAN

Scholar Attitude Award

DIVISION O



**KATIE
FENTON**

HIGHLAND MS

PRINCIPAL:
LIZ WEDER

Katie is a dedicated athlete and community leader who embodies the true essence of sportsmanship and resilience. Her journey in athletics has taught her that success transcends medals and scores; it is about growth, teamwork, and the relationships built along the way.

She believes that bouncing back from setbacks is crucial, and she draws inspiration from her teammates, who have shown her

the power of a positive attitude. Katie is passionate about fostering empathy and understanding in the sports world, advocating for a shift from a win-at-all-costs mindset to one that values respect and mutual support. Her leadership is characterized by guiding others to success and inspiring them to persevere through challenges.

AT-LARGE SELECTION

Braden finds joy in his school and community through the relationships and memories he has built, thanks to opportunities like extracurricular activities, charity work, and sports. These connections not only ease his school experience but also provide a support system. His teachers play a crucial role by preparing students for the real world, instilling morals, and equipping them with lifelong skills. The diversity and inclusiveness his community enrich his learning and foster unity.

Braden's proudest achievement is becoming an all-state top 25 runner in cross country, a testament to his hard work and teamwork. He values the journey and the lessons learned over accolades. Braden aspires to make the world more empathetic, enabling everyone to pursue their passions, and believes in leadership that inspires and guides others toward common goals.



**BRADEN
DEGNAN**

WILLOWBROOK
WESTVIEW HILLS

PRINCIPAL:
ALLISTER SCOTT



Show Us Your Spirit Campaign

Launched in Fall 2024, the “Show Us Your Spirit” campaign was created to celebrate the vibrant and passionate communities that make school sports so special. Schools from across the state were invited to submit photos and videos showcasing their spirit—featuring the enthusiasm of fans, coaches, students, and players alike.

This award is given to the school that truly embodies the values of sportsmanship, pride, and unity. It's more than just cheering—it's about showing up, supporting one another, and creating a culture where everyone feels like part of the team. The winning school stands out for its energy, heart, and the powerful sense of community that shines both in the stands and on the playing field.

Teutopolis Junior High School

We're thrilled to announce Teutopolis Junior High School as the winner of the 2024–2025 Show Us Your Spirit campaign! Throughout the year, Teutopolis showcased what true school spirit is all about. With a standout year of athletic achievements, their fans, coaches, students, and entire community were there every step of the way—cheering, supporting, and standing proudly behind their teams.



Their unwavering enthusiasm and commitment to sportsmanship and unity make them a perfect example of what this award represents. Congratulations, Teutopolis—your spirit leads the way!

20-Year State Officials

BASKETBALL



**MIKE
HEMBERGER**

Mike Hemberger has officiated for 49 years across all sports, with 20 years specifically for IESA state basketball. One of Mike's favorite memories was during a boys' game in Divernon, Illinois, when Mike mistakenly heard "five-out" as "time-out," granting a time-out. Coach Bob Hilligoss laughed and explained the mix-up, and they continued to share the story for years.

Mike is grateful to his wife, Robyn, for supporting his career, and thanks Steve Endsley for the opportunity to work post-tournaments with his favorite partner, Kyle Nestler.

BASKETBALL

Jerry McDowell has officiated for 47 years, and is receiving his 20-year state official honor for IESA basketball. One of his favorite things about officiating is visiting different schools and meeting fellow officials and coaches. Jerry is particularly grateful for the opportunity to work alongside Ken Miller, also from Coal City, with whom he has shared over 40 years of officiating experience.

He has truly enjoyed working the IESA regionals, sectionals, and state tournaments and appreciates the experience of going to various venues over the years.



**JERRY
MCDOWELL**

20-Year State Officials

BASKETBALL



**ALLEN
POGGENPOHL**

Allen Poggenpohl has officiated for 32 years, and is being honored for 20 years as a state basketball official. One of his most memorable moments came during his first year, when he accidentally started a JV game without his whistle. After a long delay and a loudspeaker announcement to find the janitor, he finally retrieved it—earning a standing ovation. Ever since, he always carries two whistles.

Allen is grateful for the mentorship of Don Huddleston, Dennis Held, and John Fahl, and for his recent partners Chad Waterman, Brian Sample, and Torrey Points. He describes his experience with the IESA as fantastic, and deeply appreciates their support and recognition of officials.

BASKETBALL

Darrin Sortor has officiated for an impressive 25 years, with 20 of those as an IESA basketball state official. One of his favorite memories as an official is working both the IHSA and IESA State Championship games, which are major career milestones.

Darrin thanks his wife Ayanna, and his children Jayden and Jeremiah for allowing him the opportunity to give back to the sport of basketball. He also gives praise to God for blessing him with the ability to officiate and serve the game he loves.



**DARRIN
SORTOR**

20-Year State Officials

BASEBALL



**MIKE
WISE**

Mike Wise has officiated for 39 years across all sports and is receiving his 20-year state official honor for baseball. One of his favorite memories is working the State Tournament, particularly the first day, with the lively atmosphere, kids getting out of school, and all teams still in the running.

Mike is also grateful to have worked with coaches Jeff Millard (Morton) and Dave Rogers (East Peoria), who treated all umpires with respect throughout his career.

BASEBALL

John Jaggi has officiated for 40 years across all sports and is being honored for 20 years of service as a state baseball official. A highlight for John was working his first state final series in 2008, and another behind the plate in 2013.

He thanks Randy and Lyle Meador for their early guidance and credits a professional baseball camp for shaping his officiating approach. John also appreciates the systems IHSA and IESA have in place to recognize deserving officials.



**JOHN
JAGGI**



20-Year State Officials



**JIM
GRIMSLEY**

GIRLS VOLLEYBALL

Jim Grimsley has been officiating for 38 years and is receiving his 20-year state official honor in volleyball. He shares that he has many favorite memories from his years on the court and couldn't pick just one.

Jim expresses deep appreciation for the IESA staff, describing them as wonderful to work with and praising the entire team. Overall, he reflects on his IESA experience as truly great and rewarding.

GIRLS VOLLEYBALL

Maureen Bolinger has devoted an incredible 45 years to officiating, including two decades of service at the IESA State Volleyball level—a milestone that has earned her the prestigious 20-Year Official Award. Among the many moments she's experienced throughout her career, one that stands out is the excitement and honor of officiating her very first IESA State Tournament.

Throughout her journey, Maureen has been especially thankful for the mentorship and support she received from Sue Ebetsch, Jill Dearing, and Karen McNaught. Their guidance and patience played a significant role in her development as an official.



**MAUREEN
BOLINGER**



Fine Arts Awards

The Distinguished Service Award and the Class Act Award are given to teacher-coaches in both Speech and Music who have set the bar high.

Introduced in the 2009-10 school year, the criteria for both awards are similar. The recipients must be actively involved in IESA Speech or Music and demonstrate the ability to develop and promote good performance practices, integrity, and life skills. Their contributions must have positively impacted students and the school community.

- Distinguished Service Award: Given to someone with 8 or more years of coaching experience in Speech or Music, with significant and/or long-term contributions.
- Class Act Award: Given to someone with 3 to 8 years of coaching experience in Speech or Music, with meaningful contributions that have positively impacted students and the school community.

Music Distinguished Service Award



**RAE ANN
DESUTTER**

With 40 years experience in teaching and directing music, Rae Ann DeSutter is a pivotal figure in Our Lady of Lourdes School's music program, consistently going above and beyond to enrich students' musical experiences. Her dedication extends beyond school walls as she arranges performances at local assisted living facilities, allowing students to share their talents with the broader Decatur community. Rae Ann's extensive experience with IESA Music competitions, both as a director and judge, enhances her ability to provide invaluable guidance. She voluntarily devotes her time beyond contractual obligations to nurture her students' musical skills and instill a deep respect for the arts. She continuously seeks to expand and improve the music program, even as she approaches a stage in her career when many consider retirement.



Speech Awards



GRETCHEN
VANCE

SPEECH DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Gretchen Vance, who has passionately coached the speech team for 15 years at Central Junior High in East Peoria, is the 2025 Distinguished Service Award winner. Her dedication to promoting and including the students of Central Junior High in the art of Speech is truly remarkable. Gretchen believes in the power of commitment, making herself available throughout the day to support her performers. She instills in her students the understanding that speaking in front of audiences is a vital skill for all careers. Additionally, she has served as a judge, showcasing her commitment to the activity. Gretchen is an invaluable asset to both the Central Junior High community and the IESA Speech community.



WHITNEY HEFLIN

SPEECH CLASS ACT AWARD

Whitney Heflin, the coach at Oak Grove Middle School in Bartonville for six years, is honored with the 2025 Class Act Award. A true advocate for speech activities, she believes that they cultivate confidence in students, foster camaraderie among team members, and instill a strong work ethic. Whitney inspires and supports every student willing to take the leap into this transformative experience. Through her leadership, the performing arts at Oak Grove have been established on a solid foundation, paving the way for future success.



ROBERTA
NEUMANN

KEN BRADBURY LIFETIME SERVICE AWARD

This year, the Ken Bradbury Award is bestowed upon Roberta Neumann, a remarkable champion of IESA Speech for over 25 years. As a member of the Speech Advisory Committee, she has played a pivotal role in shaping and nurturing the growth of this vital activity. Through her dedicated years coaching, Roberta created an incredible program that engaged hundreds of students, igniting their passion for Speech. She generously shares her expertise with coaches as an IESA workshop presenter. Above all, Roberta stands as a loyal advocate for students, coaches, and Speech itself. Her work as a judge and judge representative has provided invaluable insights and unwavering support. Individuals like Roberta are the driving force behind the success of IESA Speech, ensuring it remains one of the most impactful programs offered by the IESA.



Chess Excellence Awards

CHES LIFEIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



BETSY ZACATE

Betsy Zacate has been actively involved with IESA Chess for 11 years, starting in 2014. One of her favorite memories is when the first year of the tournament was held at a hockey rink, a unique experience that left a lasting impression on her. She also cherishes all of her interactions with Nicole Schaeftbauer, which have been a highlight of her time with the program.

Betsy would like to thank Mike Zacate and Nicole Schaeftbauer for their exceptional work in chess at the IESA and for giving students the valuable opportunity to participate and grow through the program. Additionally, she admires the IESA staff, whom she believes are truly unsung heroes, always working tirelessly behind the scenes for the benefit of the students.

CHES DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Jim Aman has been a dedicated force in the world of chess for over 15 years, with involvement in IESA dating back to 2010, when organized competition began. Jim is especially grateful to Mike Zacate, who played a pivotal role in establishing chess as a school activity at both the high school and middle school levels.

Reflecting on his experience, Jim shares that his experience with the IESA has been "a wonderful procession of good people all dedicated to helping our youth grow mentally and emotionally." One of his favorite memories is simply the joy he sees in students at the state competition—the glow in their eyes—as they immerse themselves in the game.



JIM AMAN

Scholastic Bowl Excellence Awards



BRENDA SEARBY

CLASS A COACH AWARD

Brenda Searby, a coach at Champaign Next Generation, has been involved in Scholastic Bowl for 11 years, beginning her IESA journey in 2014. One of her most meaningful memories was the support she received from the IESA staff in 2023 when she had to step back from coaching for a year. She's especially grateful to Sally Asmus and Sheri Strohl, who have been consistently helpful and welcoming. Brenda finds the State meet a highlight thanks to their friendly presence. She describes her experience as incredibly fulfilling, gaining satisfaction from seeing students grow and connecting with dedicated coaches across Illinois. She also thanks her teams and parents for their ongoing support.



DAVE
KNOEPFLE

CLASS AA COACH AWARD

Dave Knoepfle, a coach at Franklin Middle School in Springfield, has been involved with Scholastic Bowl for 21 years, starting in 2003–2004. One of his favorite memories is attending state tournaments, especially those where his family could see his teams compete. He credits his parents for teaching him kindness, and his high school coaches John Rigg, Don Thornton, and Tony Parola for shaping his coaching style. Dave also thanks his fellow coaches, including John Barrett, Suzanne Pettyjohn, and Jeff Price, for pushing him to improve, and his wife Robin for supporting him through all the time spent on practices and tournaments. Dave values how IESA activities bring students together, fostering lasting memories and friendships, with winning being secondary to the connections made.

SCHOLASTIC BOWL DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD



JACK SMALL

Jack Small has been involved with IESA Scholastic Bowl for nearly 30 years having coached high school Scholastic Bowl for 12 years prior to that. His journey began in 1996, when he first submitted questions to Bob Gattrell, and soon after, he began reviewing questions with Bob and Steve Endsley. He credits the strong leadership of IESA administrators and the office support staff for their hard work and commitment to the students. Jack has a deep passion for Scholastic Bowl, believing it provides kids an opportunity to "shine" and experience success, even if it's not through athletics. In addition to moderating the state series, Jack has contributed to the workshop, question review and advisory committees, and even created a video for new Scholastic Bowl moderators.



Friends of the IESA

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD



BERT TRUMP

Bert Trump has been a dedicated part of the IESA for an impressive 47 years, starting in 1978. Throughout her career, Bert has contributed to a variety of roles, including working with the Girls Athletic Committee, Track Advisory, Volleyball Advisory, and assisting with State Track events.

One of her favorite components of working with the IESA is witnessing the success of students, which has been a constant source of joy throughout her journey. Bert is especially grateful for the support of her family and has thoroughly enjoyed the many years spent seeing kids succeed in their endeavors.

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Dru Heggen has been involved with the IESA since 1980 and has worked IESA events for an impressive 45 years. Over the course of her long tenure, Dru has been involved with a wide range of activities, including overseeing the staging area at the state track meet and serving as a speech judge.

Dru reflects fondly on the many years spent working with students and expresses gratitude for the constant support from the IESA staff. She extends special thanks to all the students she's had the pleasure of working with, as well as to Sheri Strohl and the entire IESA team for always being there with answers and support when needed.



DRU HEGGEN



Division Sportsmanship Award

Schools are nominated for this award by their peers based on their demonstration of outstanding sportsmanship, character, and integrity in both athletics and academics.

To qualify, a school must:

- Participate in at least five IESA activities during the current school year
- Have no ejections or reports of unsportsmanlike conduct by players, coaches, or fans
- Promote good citizenship and a positive, respectful culture throughout the school and community

This award honors schools that go above and beyond in fostering fairness, respect, and a supportive environment for all.

2025 Award Winners

Division A



Hawthorn Middle School North

IESA member for 19 years.



Grayslake Middle School

IESA member for over 20 years.



Division Sportsmanship Award

Division A (cont.)



Matthews Middle School

IESA member for 18 years.



Lake Zurich Middle School North

IESA member for over 20 years.

Division B



AlWood Middle School

IESA member for over 20 years.

Division C



Westview Hills Middle School

IESA member for over 20 years.



Lisle Junior High School

IESA member for over 20 years.



Division Sportsmanship Award

Division D



Wilmington Middle School

IESA member for over 20 years.

Division E



Wallace Grade School

IESA member for over 20 years.

Division F



Princeville Junior High School

IESA member for over 20 years.

Division G



Cissna Park Jr. High School

IESA member for over 20 years.

Division H



Cornerstone Christian Academy

IESA member for over 20 years.

Division I



Carroll Catholic School

IESA member for over 20 years.

Division Sportsmanship Award

Division J



Southeastern JHS

IESA member for over 20 years.

Division K



Prairieview Ogden JHS

IESA member for 19 years.

Division L



Okaw Valley Middle School

IESA member for over 20 years.

Division M



Pawnee Grade School

IESA member for over 20 years.

Division N



Altamont Grade School

IESA member for over 20 years.

Division O



Trimpe Middle School

IESA member for 19 years.

About the IESA

The Illinois Elementary School Association (IESA) stands as a pivotal organization dedicated to fostering both athletic and academic excellence among young students throughout Illinois. Established in 1929 and growing to now have nearly 1,000 annual members, the IESA has had a mission to provide enriching opportunities for elementary and middle school students by offering a diverse array of programs that encourage personal growth, teamwork, and good sportsmanship.

By organizing state-level competitions and events, the association not only supports the development of athletic skills but also promotes academic achievements, nurturing well-rounded individuals prepared for future challenges. Through its commitment to inclusivity and fair play, the IESA plays a crucial role in shaping the educational experiences of countless young learners, inspiring them to strive for greatness in all their endeavors.

Schools are given the opportunity for students to participate in a wide range of interscholastic activities, including sports, music, and academic competitions, which can foster teamwork, discipline, and a sense of community. Member schools benefit from the association's commitment to promoting good sportsmanship and ethical behavior, contributing to the development of students' character.

Thank you to all our member schools!



Special Thanks

We would like to thank this year's Scholar Attitude Award judges for their time and greatly appreciate the careful consideration they have taken in reviewing the applications. These efforts makes it possible to acknowledge the hard work these students have put into their athletic, academic, and community service endeavors.

Angie WellsBolingbrook
Noreen Acton Villa Grove
Greg Peterson Wenona
Brett PapocciaNormal
Karen Jones Pontiac

Thorn Keene Peoria
Jay Marshall Richmond
Ross ForlinesFindlay
Sue Zartler Chatham
Val Ambrose Bloomington



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