



*3<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL*

# CELEBRATION OF EXCELLENCE

APRIL 28<sup>TH</sup>, 2026

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**Double Tree Hotel  
Bloomington, IL**

# 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.



# IESA Board of Directors



- Division A . . . . . Mr. Tim Haupt, Barrington Station
- Division B . . . . . Dr. Darryl Hogue, Fulton River Bend
- Division C . . . . . Mr. Justin Warnke, Woodridge Jefferson
- Division D . . . . . Mrs. Renee Marski, Shorewood Troy
- Division E . . . . . Mr. Brian Yoder, Flanagan
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- Division G . . . . . Mrs. Michelle Chavers, Herscher Limestone
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- Division J . . . . . Mr. Tim Kerr, Augusta Southeastern
- Division K . . . . . Mr. Brian Allensworth, Sidell Salt Fork
- Division L . . . . . Mr. Jared Vanausdoll, Tuscola East Prairie
- Division M . . . . . Mr. Tod Davis, Springfield Franklin
- Division N . . . . . Mr. Patrick Drees, Teutopolis
- Division O . . . . . Dr. Allen Duncan, Edwardsville Liberty

## IESA Staff



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Executive  
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**Chris Frasco**  
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**Jackie Litwiller**  
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Sally Asmus, Administrative Assistant

Bailey Beals, Administrative Assistant  
Sheri Strohl, Comptroller

Craig Johnson, Technology Coordinator  
Matt Hawkins - Corporate Sponsorships - TPG



# 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, Chad Johnson  
National Anthem, Performed by Blair Mathis from Royal  
Prairieview Ogden  
Opening Remarks: Tony Ingold, Board of Directors President
- 1:15 pm ..... Scholar Attitude Awards - Divisions A - E  
20-Year State Official Awards  
Scholar Attitude Awards - Divisions F - J
- 1:50 pm ..... IESA Thank You and Appreciation: Nicole Schaeffbauer, Executive  
Director
- 1:55 pm ..... Fine Arts Awards  
Scholar Attitude Awards - Divisions K - At-Large  
Excellence & Friends of the IESA Awards  
NFHS Award Winners
- 2:35 pm ..... Division Sportsmanship Awards
- 2:50 pm ..... Closing



## National Anthem Performer:

Blair Mathis from  
Royal Prairieview Ogden



# 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:

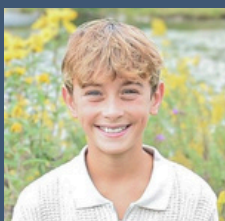
- Be of 8th grade status
- Have a minimum grade point average of 3.5 on a 4.0 scale
- Participate in at least one IESA activity during each year of their two-year junior high career
- Demonstrate outstanding citizenship during their junior high tenure - AND-
- Submit an essay titled "The Value of Sportsmanship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



**BRADEN  
BLACKOWICZ**

LAKE ZURICH  
NORTH

PRINCIPAL:  
BROOKE CROWLEY

Braden appreciates the strong sense of belonging at his school, where he feels part of a supportive “pack” through academics, clubs, and athletics. From collaborating in honors classes to participating in service through MSN Connect and creative expression in Literary Magazine, he has built meaningful connections with peers and teachers. These experiences, along with trying new activities like volleyball, have helped him grow socially and academically while feeling accepted and involved.

He is especially proud of earning All-State honors in cross-country after overcoming a difficult setback the year before. Through discipline and perseverance, he turned failure into motivation, proving his resilience. Braden hopes to limit AI’s role in education, believing it can hinder critical thinking and integrity. He defines leadership as inspiring others and leading by example, shown through encouraging teammates and fostering a positive, supportive team environment.

Hailey values her deep-rooted connection to her Geneseo community, where generations of her family have lived and learned. She appreciates the strong support shown at events, from races to fundraisers, where encouragement matters more than winning. Volunteering and traditions like the FFA tractor pull in honor of her grandfather strengthen her bond to the community, making it feel like home while inspiring her to give back.

She takes pride in building her cattle herd, starting with her first bucket calf, Oreo, which taught her responsibility and dedication. Through showing and raising cattle, she has developed a strong work ethic and future goals. Hailey hopes to make the world kinder, believing compassion fosters confidence and inclusion. She defines leadership as guiding others while listening, demonstrated through her role as 4-H president, where she values respect, organization, and being a positive role model.

## DIVISION B



**HAILEY  
OLSON**

GENESEO MS

PRINCIPAL:  
NATHAN O’DELL



# Scholar Attitude Award

## DIVISION C



**JUSTIN  
FLORENTINO**

ST. CHARLES  
THOMPSON

PRINCIPAL:  
MATT CLARK

Justin values his school's positive, inclusive environment, where students feel supported and respected regardless of differences. He appreciates the kindness among peers and the effort teachers make to create a welcoming space. In his community, he enjoys the sense of safety, unity, and connection, with events and activities that bring people together. He sees St. Charles as a thriving place where people stay engaged and involved.

He is most proud of being nominated for this program, recognizing it as a reflection of his hard work and

individuality. The honor helped him realize the importance of consistent effort and commitment. Justin hopes to inspire greater support and understanding in the world, believing positivity helps others grow, and encouragement can go a very long way in giving someone the push to do more. He defines leadership as accountability, initiative, and guiding others toward success, both in academics and team settings.

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Kash cherishes his small, close-knit community, where connection and inclusion come naturally. From pickup games on the blacktop to neighbors, teachers, and even delivery drivers joining the fun, everyone plays a role in creating a welcoming environment. Older kids once included him, and now he passes that on, encouraging younger players to join in. With families, grandparents, and teachers actively supporting events, his town feels united, making every achievement a shared celebration.

He is most proud of being known as a dependable teammate and quiet leader, building lasting relationships through effort and respect. His fundraiser, Kash for a Cure, reflects his compassion and desire to support families affected by cancer, inspired by the loss of his father. Kash believes leadership is about understanding others and adapting to help them succeed, emphasizing empathy, flexibility, and leading by example to bring out the best in a team.

## DIVISION D



**KASH  
KERNER**

SOUTH  
WILMINGTON

PRINCIPAL:  
SHANNON HAMM



# Scholar Attitude Award

## DIVISION E



**ELSIE  
HANSEN**

GRAYMONT

PRINCIPAL:  
TODD BEAN

Elsie values her small K-8 school and tight-knit community, where everyone knows and supports one another. She appreciates the kindness shown during difficult times, as neighbors and classmates come together to help through meals, work, or simple encouragement. This strong sense of care and connection makes her community feel special and reassuring, creating an environment where no one feels alone.

She is most proud of being known as a kind and supportive person, striving to make others feel included and valued.

Inspired to leave a positive impact, she believes small acts of compassion can make a lasting difference. If she could change the world, she would encourage greater consideration and empathy, believing this could address many larger issues. Elsie defines leadership as supporting, teaching, and standing up for others, whether on a large or small scale.

## DIVISION F



**COLBY  
GENTLE**

TOULON STARK  
COUNTY

PRINCIPAL:  
MEGAN MCGANN

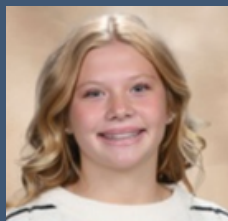
Colby embraces his small school and community for the strong relationships it fosters. Teachers, coaches, and administrators take a personal interest in students' lives, making him feel recognized and supported. Whether sharing his passion for showing cattle with classmates or connecting over everyday conversations, these interactions build trust and motivation. The close-knit environment extends beyond school, with community members actively involved, creating a welcoming atmosphere where familiar faces and encouragement are constant.

He is most proud of his first year showing cattle, where he formed a deep bond with his steer, Clifford, while learning responsibility, discipline, and teamwork. The experience taught him lasting life lessons beyond competition. Colby hopes for a cure for cancer, inspired by its impact on his family and others around him. He defines leadership as leading by example—modeling respect, responsibility, and effort both in group work and as a representative of his school.



# Scholar Attitude Award

## DIVISION G



**SIENA  
BELISLE**

MANTENO

PRINCIPAL:  
NATHAN SHORT

Siena values her school and community for their uplifting, inclusive spirit that breaks stereotypes and celebrates individuality. Students come together across activities to show pride and support, whether in achievements or hardships, creating a family-like environment. This care extends beyond the school through service projects, reflecting a shared commitment to helping others. She takes pride in being part of a community that encourages authenticity, resilience, and compassion.

Siena is most proud of being named her volleyball team's MVP during a successful state run, an honor that affirmed her leadership, dedication, and ability to support teammates. Leadership to her is doing what's right, leading by example, and treating others with respect and empathy. She strives to be positive, accountable, and celebratory of others, while advocating for environmental change through collective action to ensure that both people and animals can share the surroundings.

Lauren appreciates her close-knit K-12 school community, where students of all ages support one another like family. She appreciates the welcoming environment, especially how new students are quickly included and feel at home. School pride is strong, with students, staff, alumni, and even longtime community members rallying behind teams and celebrating success together. This sense of unity and shared experience creates lasting connections and meaningful memories across generations.

She is most proud of earning a volleyball sportsmanship pin, which affirmed her leadership and teamwork. The award taught her that true leadership is selfless—lifting others up, staying positive, and prioritizing the team's success over personal mistakes. She believes leadership means supporting peers in challenges, whether in sports or academics. Lauren also hopes to end bullying, emphasizing kindness, empathy, and respect so everyone feels valued and accepted.

## DIVISION H



**LAUREN  
STRATING**

LEXINGTON

PRINCIPAL:  
JENNIFER MCCOY



# Scholar Attitude Award

## DIVISION I



**KRUZ  
FROEBE**  
LINCOLN WEST  
LINCOLN-BROADWELL

PRINCIPAL:  
JESSICA DARE

Kruz values being part of a caring school and town where students are supported in every sport and activity. Moments like seeing the courthouse lit in school colors remind him that the community celebrates together and takes pride in its young people. He feels this kind of encouragement helps everyone work harder and stay connected. He is proud of learning to balance sports, school, family, and new responsibilities while keeping strong grades and growing as a person.

He hopes for a world where people treat one another with fairness every day, judging others by their character instead of labels or assumptions. To him, leadership means setting the right example and earning trust through actions, whether as a team captain or simply by how he treats others. Including teammates, respecting adults, staying positive, and taking responsibility are all part of the standard he tries to set for himself and for those who look up to him.

Lynn feels that her school and community are like a family because everyone supports one another through donations, volunteering, and shared events. She values how students and staff give back through food drives, local service projects, and helping at community gatherings. She's especially proud of earning a place in the Junior National Honor Society, which reflects her hard work, leadership, and dedication to serving others. This has really helped her grow as a leader and role model, leading her to become president of her school's student council.

She hopes to help the world become more eco-friendly by protecting habitats, improving health, and using cleaner resources. Promoting wise choices and protecting resources are key to improving the overall health of the world population. To her, leadership means staying strong, lifting others up, and setting a positive example. She believes true leaders encourage their peers, stay confident during challenges, and stand up for what's right.

## DIVISION J



**LYNN  
HARDWICK**

VIRGINIA

PRINCIPAL:  
MATT OWENS



# Scholar Attitude Award

## DIVISION K



**ASHLEY  
MARTIN**

MAHOMET-SEYMOUR

PRINCIPAL:  
NATHAN MILLS

Ashley recognizes how caring the people in her school and community are. She feels lifted by friends, teachers, coaches, and teammates who cheer for her and her team and help her grow. Her running community is especially meaningful, with many people consistently showing up, cheering, and staying connected long after the running season is over. Her cross-country team's size brings diversity, and her coaches make sure everyone feels included and has room to grow. She feels lucky to live in a place where people genuinely care.

Her proudest moment comes from a track season where she learned resilience, stepped into new roles, and reached goals she didn't know she had, allowing her to end the year with big wins in the 800 and the mile. Her dream for the world is for everyone to treat others with respect, celebrate differences, and choose kindness. To Ashley, leadership means lifting others up, setting high expectations, communicating with care, and showing strong character even when no one is watching.

Nolan feels that both his school and community are like a close family where people look out for one another and support everyone who calls South Fork home. He values the way others are welcomed and a sense of belonging is created by everyone. He also takes great pride in being a positive example for his younger brother, knowing he is someone who watches his actions closely. He aims to show him what it means to be a good student, athlete, and person, and tries to model those traits for other younger kids as well.

Nolan believes the world needs more caring and serving rather than chasing likes and followers. He hopes people focus more on empathy and helping others and less on the desire for attention. To him, a true leader is someone who acts with honesty, kindness, and courage, stands up for others even when alone, and serves the people they lead. He views real leadership as lifting people up, not looking down on them.

## DIVISION L



**NOLAN  
MULVANEY**

KINCAID  
SOUTH FORK

PRINCIPAL:  
STEVE GROLL



# Scholar Attitude Award

## DIVISION M



**GRIFYN  
BAILEY**

AUBURN JHS  
AT DIVERNON

PRINCIPAL:  
CHRISTY BAILEY

Grifyn enjoys how the people around her shape her days with kindness, encouragement, and support. From teachers who lift students up to coaches who care about the person as much as the athlete, she feels inspired to treat others with that same warmth. Her community holds a special place in her heart as well, especially in the way they come together for families facing hard moments—something that reminds her of the love shown to her own family years ago.

She is proud of the confidence she has built over time, learning to accept herself and see her own worth beyond what others say or think. This growth guides her belief in treating people with care, leading through quiet actions, and helping others feel seen. She hopes to make the world kinder by showing empathy, standing up for those who need it, and choosing to be a steady light for others.

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Sports are at the heart of Jared's connection to his school and community. From childhood teams to cross country, track, and basketball at EJHS, he's learned important lessons about teamwork, discipline, and pushing himself. His proudest accomplishment came when he placed 13th at the 2025 IESA State Finals, earning his second all-state medal. Even though it wasn't his fastest season time, it was his strongest race on that course, and he knows that's something to celebrate. Running has changed his life and opened new opportunities as he prepares for high school.

## DIVISION N



**JARED  
KLINGLER**

EFFINGHAM JHS

PRINCIPAL:  
CHARLIE SCHWERMAN

Jared believes the world could be better with more kindness, and he tries to live that out every day. His faith encourages him to show compassion and treat others with respect. He thinks good leadership comes from people who stay focused, motivate others, and set a strong example. He sees that in his coaches, who guide him through training and competition, and in his parents, who support him, cheer for him, and keep him moving toward his goals. Their leadership inspires him to become someone who leads with effort, kindness, and determination.



# Scholar Attitude Award

## DIVISION O



**JEFFERY  
BAGLEY**

PIASA  
SOUTHWESTERN

PRINCIPAL:  
SHANNON BOWMAN

Jeffery values his school and community and how they are part of a close-knit farming area where classmates, teachers, and neighbors support one another like family. He enjoys learning in ways that connect directly to agriculture and everyday life. He's proud of winning two categories at a multi-county skillathon, where his hands-on experience with livestock care helped him succeed. Moments like this make him feel seen for the hard work he puts in on the farm.

He cares deeply about the world around him and believes climate change is a challenge everyone must take seriously. Rising temperatures affect farms, animals, and communities, and he hopes more people will work together to protect the planet. To him, real leadership means staying positive, working hard, and lifting others up—setting an example that helps the whole group do their best.

## AT-LARGE



**LAYANA  
ZAYID**

FRANKFORT  
SUMMIT HILL

PRINCIPAL:  
LAURA GOEBEL

Layana is a dedicated student-athlete who has built many of her favorite memories through sports at Summit Hill Junior High. From long bus rides filled with laughter to the support of coaches and teammates, athletics has shaped her confidence and friendships. Growing up as the oldest sibling, she learned early on how to guide others with kindness, patience, and encouragement, carrying that same spirit onto the court as a volleyball captain.

Her proudest accomplishment is the strength she's built within herself—learning to replace self-doubt with determination and growth. Layana also carries a deep passion for helping people facing hardship around the world, inspired by her Palestinian-American identity and her time supporting organizations that care for those in need. Her experiences, including caring for a young refugee named Adam, continue to shape her hope for a world where every voice is heard and every person is treated with dignity.



## 20-Year State Officials

### SOFTBALL



**ROGER NICHOLS**

Roger Nichols is being honored for 20 years as an IESA State Finals softball official, a milestone that reflects his remarkable 48 years as an IHSA licensed official. One of Roger's greatest joys in officiating has been the opportunity to connect with student-athletes and fellow officials, creating lasting memories through the relationships built along the way.

What he enjoys most about the middle school level is the energy the athletes bring to every contest and their strong desire to learn and improve. Roger's long-standing commitment, professionalism, and love for the game have left a meaningful mark on IESA softball and generations of student-athletes.

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### BASEBALL

Jon Garlits is being recognized for 20 years of officiating the IESA Baseball State Finals, a remarkable achievement in his 41-year career as an IHSA licensed official. One of Jon's favorite aspects of officiating is watching student-athletes continue their journey beyond junior high, with many advancing to compete in high school and even at the college level.

He credits the encouragement of Bob Gasaway and Steve Endsley, whose support has been invaluable throughout his career. What Jon enjoys most about working middle school games is witnessing young athletes succeed and experiencing their excitement and reactions on the field. His passion for student growth has left a lasting impact on IESA baseball.



**JON GARLITS**



## 20-Year State Officials

### BASKETBALL



**KEVIN  
COUGHENOUR**

Kevin Coughenour has built a 48-year legacy as a respected Illinois basketball official and is being recognized today for 20 years as an IESA basketball state official. His career spans the IESA, IHSA, JUCO, NAIA, NCAA, and the CBA, including assignments at both boys and girls state final games and major high school tournaments. A dedicated mentor, Kevin has been an IHSA Certified Clinician since the program's founding and currently serves as IHSA Observer and IESA Coordinator of Officials, shaping the next generation of referees.

Inducted into the Illinois Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 2010, Kevin exemplifies leadership, professionalism, and lifelong commitment to the sport.

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### BASKETBALL

Terry Glaub is being honored for 20 years as an IESA State Finals basketball official, a milestone that complements his 28 years as an IHSA licensed official. One of the most meaningful parts of Terry's officiating career has been the opportunity to watch kids grow from junior high through high school, seeing their development not only as athletes, but as individuals.

Terry is especially grateful to IESA administrative staff Steve Endsley, Nicole Schaeftbauer, and Chris Frasco for the opportunity to mentor fellow officials in a leadership role over the past several years. What he enjoys most about working middle school games is seeing kids improve and experience success, especially those who may just be starting to learn the game.



**TERRY GLAUB**



# Performing 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



**RAQUEL REID**

Raquel Reid of Petersburg PORTA has dedicated more than 31 years to teaching and directing, leaving a lasting impact on generations of students through her passion for music education. She has created a welcoming and supportive environment where students with different backgrounds have the opportunity to grow and succeed.

The value and educational worth of music in the lives of PORTA students is undeniable, and much of that can be traced to Raquel's unwavering commitment. She pours both her professional and personal life into music education, inspiring students not only to develop their talents, but also to build confidence, belonging, and a lifelong appreciation for the arts.



# Speech Awards

## SPEECH DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD



LAURA ANGLIN

Laura Anglin, who has passionately coached the speech team at Metamora Grade School in Metamora for 20 years, is the 2026 Distinguished Service Award winner. Her dedication to promoting and involving students in the art of speech is truly remarkable. Laura consistently invests her time and energy in supporting students, using speech to empower them academically and personally. Through her encouragement and commitment to growth, she strengthens not only individual students but the school community as a whole. She also highlights the educational value of speech by showing how communication skills enhance critical thinking, academic success, and personal development. Under her guidance, students learn that speech is a vital tool for lifelong learning and community involvement.

## SPEECH CLASS ACT AWARD



WES SKYM

Wes Skym, speech coach at South Middle School in Arlington Heights for the past three years, is honored with the 2026 Class Act Award. A dedicated advocate for speech and theatre, Wes believes these activities build student confidence, foster camaraderie, and instill a strong work ethic. He inspires and supports every student willing to take the leap into this transformative experience. Under his leadership, the program has seen significant growth in both participation and interest. His contributions also extend beyond his school, as he has served all IESA Speech schools as a contest host, head contest judge, and member of the Speech Advisory Committee.

## KEN BRADBURY LIFETIME SERVICE AWARD



TAMI  
SCHROEDER

This year, the Ken Bradbury Award is bestowed upon Tami Schroeder, a remarkable champion of IESA Speech for more than 25 years. As the speech coach at Springfield Christian School for 25 years, Tami has built an inclusive community where self-expression thrives and self-consciousness fades. She understands that speaking skills are essential life skills and encourages every student to reach their full potential. Many of her participants go on to serve in leadership roles and are given opportunities to speak on the radio or represent their school at open-house events. Tami also sets a high standard for professionalism through her support of administration, collaboration with peers, and commitment to her school community.



# NFHS Outstanding Educators

## OUTSTANDING MUSIC EDUCATOR AWARD



**CURTIS FISCHER-  
OELSCHLAEGER**

Curtis Fischer-Oelschlaeger, affectionately known as “Mr. O,” has been the heart of the Rockridge Music Program for 28 years. His dedication to students and passion for music education have helped build a program recognized across the state. He works closely with teachers at all levels, inspiring younger students and mentoring future educators.

At the junior high level, Curtis has been a strong advocate for maintaining opportunities in both band and choir, ensuring students can explore and grow in music. He provides numerous opportunities for students to perform and succeed through concerts, festivals, and statewide events. His leadership and commitment have played a key role in making the Rockridge Music Department one of the premier programs in Illinois.

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## OUTSTANDING SPEECH EDUCATOR AWARD

Shauna has made a tremendous impact as the coach of the Dunlap Middle School Speech Team, building an inclusive and thriving program that welcomes 80–100 students each year. Her dedication to making every student feel included has created an environment where confidence grows, friendships are formed, and students are encouraged to find their voice.

A passionate advocate for speech, Shauna provides students with countless opportunities to perform and showcase their hard work both at school and in the community. Beyond coaching, she has also supported the activity through judging, hosting contests, and presenting at the IESA Fall Speech Workshop. Her leadership has built a strong foundation for speech and the performing arts at Dunlap Middle School for years to come.



**SHAUNA SEGLER**



# Chess Excellence Awards

## MIKE ZACATE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



**MURREL RHODES**

Murrel Rhodes has dedicated more than 10 years to working the IESA Chess State Tournament, playing an important role in the continued success of the event. What he enjoys most is watching the chess program continue to grow and seeing participation numbers rise year after year, a reflection of the increasing excitement and opportunities the activity provides for students.

Murrel says it has been a pleasure to work alongside the IESA staff, especially Leslie Albee, Nicole Schaeftbauer, and Jonathan Hauter. His commitment and enthusiasm for the growth of chess has helped make a lasting impact on the experience for student participants across the state.

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## CHESS DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Stefanie McAllister is being honored with the Chess Distinguished Service Award for building Germantown Hills Middle School's chess program into one of the school's most vibrant and inclusive activities. Under her leadership, participation has grown to 54 students, creating opportunities for beginners to feel welcomed and experienced players to stay challenged.

Her organization, enthusiasm, and genuine care for students has fostered a strong sense of belonging, earning tremendous support from both students and parents in her school community.



**STEFANIE  
MCALLISTER**



# Scholastic Bowl Excellence Awards

## CLASS A COACH AWARD



Heather Johnson has devoted five years to IESA Scholastic Bowl, coaching at Crestwood Middle School and building meaningful connections with her students. One of her most treasured experiences was coaching her daughter and speaking to her as both a coach and a mom at the team's eighth-grade banquet.

Dedicated to student engagement and growth, Heather has attended Scholastic Bowl workshops to gather ideas for enhancing practices, increasing involvement, and celebrating successes. She designs engaging games and lessons, sends daily trivia questions with rewards, and creates personalized recognition for student achievements. Always willing to step in wherever needed, Heather is a coach her students look up to for her enthusiasm, creativity, and commitment to fostering a love of learning.

HEATHER JOHNSON

## CLASS AA COACH AWARD



John Barrett has been involved with IESA Scholastic Bowl since 2017, building strong connections with coaches, students, and officials along the way. As the coach at Pleasant Plains Middle School, he believes Scholastic Bowl reflects a school's academic rigor, showcasing student dedication, preparation, and intellectual growth. Known for his passion and integrity, John inspires students to think critically, collaborate effectively, and believe in their potential. He dedicates countless hours to creating engaging, challenging practices while fostering an environment where curiosity is celebrated and mistakes become opportunities to learn. His leadership, enthusiasm, and commitment continue to make a lasting impact on both participants and the broader academic community.

JOHN BARRETT

## JACK SMALL DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD



Ann Sullivan is our Jack Small Distinguished Service Award winner. Ann has been a valued part of the IESA for more than 20 years, beginning her work with the IESA around 2006. One of her favorite experiences has been serving on the question review team, where she enjoys collaborating with dedicated colleagues who share her commitment to excellence. Ann expressed her gratitude to Chris Frasco and shared how much she values working with such outstanding cohorts during the question review process. Her dedication, partnership, and commitment to the activity she loves have made a lasting impact on the IESA.

ANN SULLIVAN



# Friends of the IESA

## DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD



**ANGIE PRANG**

Angie Prang has partnered with the IESA for more than 20 years, with the relationship likely dating back to the opening of the DoubleTree in 1997. In her role at the DoubleTree, Angie helps host numerous IESA events each year, including workshops and the annual Celebration of Excellence. Over the years, she and the DoubleTree team have played an important role in creating welcoming and successful experiences for our students, staff, and guests.

Angie shared that it is hard to choose just one favorite memory because working with the IESA team over the years has been so rewarding. She credits the entire DoubleTree team for their continued success and partnership. We are incredibly grateful for Angie's partnership, friendship, and the care she brings to every IESA event.

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## DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Kim Schafer is celebrating her 26th year working with the IESA, a partnership that began in 2001. As a former Athletic Director, Kim helped create outstanding experiences for countless student-athletes and coaches throughout her tenure. Reflecting on her favorite memories, she shared that there are too many to list, but witnessing three state championships in boys basketball and girls track stands at the top.

Kim expressed gratitude to the many coaches she had the pleasure of working with over the years, along with the dedicated staging crew she continues to work with at the IESA State Track Meet. She also shared that working with the IESA has been a great experience, especially watching student-athletes grow as they compete and strive for excellence in their sports.



**KIM SCHAFER**



# Friends of the IESA

## DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD



**SUE KEMPER**

Sue Kemper has been involved with the IESA for 20 years, beginning her work in 2006. Over the years, she has played a meaningful role in supporting student-athletes and IESA events. Reflecting on her experience, Sue shared that there are many memorable moments, but what stands out most is the privilege of watching student-athletes grow, compete, and learn lessons that will guide them on whatever path they choose in life.

Sue expressed her appreciation for the IESA leadership and the dedicated track staging crew she has been fortunate to work alongside throughout the years. She also shared her gratitude for the opportunities the IESA provides, allowing student-athletes to grow and compete in a safe and supportive environment.

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## DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Kara Smith has been part of the IESA family for 28 years, beginning her journey in 1998. A longtime boys and girls basketball, volleyball, and track and field coach at Peoria Pleasant Valley, one of her favorite memories is celebrating her first State champion in the 400-meter dash, Donielle Ross.

Kara is thankful for the volunteers and IESA leadership who have been such a positive influence and support system throughout the years. Her IESA family stood beside her through open heart surgery and the loss of both of her parents, offering lifelong friendship, support, and joy. Kara is deeply grateful to be part of a community that has meant so much to her life.



**KARA SMITH**



# 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.

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## 2026 Award Winners

### Division A



Highland Middle School



Hawthorn Middle School North



# Division Sportsmanship Award

## Division B



Forreston Middle School

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## Division C



Gower Middle School



Highlands Middle School

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## Division D



Summit Hill JHS

## Division E



Serena Middle School



# Division Sportsmanship Award

## Division F



Pleasant Valley MS

## Division G



Paxton Buckley Loda JHS

## Division H



Eureka Middle School

## Division I



Hartsburg-Emden JHS

## Division J



V.I.T Junior High

## Division K



Unity JHS



# Division Sportsmanship Award

## Division L



Cumberland JHS



Arcola JHS



Casey Westfield Roosevelt



Neoga JHS

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## Division M



Tri-City Middle School

## Division N



Ramsey Elementary School



# Division Sportsmanship Award

Division 0



Triad Middle School

## 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.*



## 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!**

