



Larry Bruno Hall of Achievement to induct members Aug. 1

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By Linda Wilson Fuoco

When past and present Beaver Falls residents gather to induct six people and two teams into the Larry Bruno Foundation Hall of Achievement, the Beaver County town's most famous "son," Joe Namath, is expected to be there.

The Aug. 1 "celebration and honorees dinner" is the fifth annual fundraiser for the foundation's museum in the Carnegie Free Library of Beaver Falls and for scholarships awarded yearly to students at Beaver Falls High School and Blackhawk High School.

Tickets are \$65 for the banquet, which is 6-8:30 p.m. at the Club at Shadow Lakes in Hopewell. Cash bar and hors d'oeuvres are 5-5:45 p.m. To purchase tickets contact Ed DeRose at edwardderose143@comcast.net or 412-298-1430.

After playing football in Beaver Falls at Geneva College, Mr. Bruno was drafted by the Steelers in 1947. He didn't sign as a pro, choosing instead to coach football at Monaca High School from 1949-1959. He coached at Beaver Falls High School from 1959-1978, where his most famous player was Joe Namath, who quarterbacked the 1960 team that went 10-0.

When Mr. Namath, who played most of his professional career with the New York Jets, was inducted in the NFL Hall of Fame in 1985, he chose Mr. Bruno to present him at the Canton, Ohio, ceremony.

"But the Hall of Achievement is not just about Joe Namath and it's not just about football," said Steve Higgins, a Bruno Foundation board member who played for Mr. Bruno at Beaver Falls High School.

The Hall of Achievement also has categories for teaching and community service and inductions are given to high-achieving athletes in other sports, including baseball and gymnastics this year, Mr. Higgins said.

The 2015 “community service” inductee is John T. “Big John” Jackson, who was a Beaver Falls Police Department officer and a captain from 1951-1977, then a Beaver County deputy sheriff until 1984, when he retired. He died in 2005.

“Big John was a pillar of the community,” Mr. Higgins said.

Mr. Bruno’s coaching was life changing for many young men, including Mr. Higgins. Bear Bryant from the University of Alabama and coaches from many big universities, including Joe Paterno at Penn State, recruited Beaver Falls players because of Mr. Bruno’s reputation as a legendary coach, Mr. Higgins said.

“I got a full football scholarship at ’Bama,” Mr. Higgins said. “The first thing Coach Bryant asked me, when I got there, was ‘How’s Coach Bruno?’ and we talked about that for a half hour.”

When Coach Bruno developed Alzheimer’s in 2008, many of his former players held a fund-raiser to help with medical expenses.

“More than 1,000 people showed up and donated \$80,000,” Mr. Higgins said. When Mr. Bruno died in 2010, “there was still \$25,000 left.”

The Larry Bruno Foundation was formed with a board that included many of the coach’s players, including Mr. Namath, who has made generous cash donations to the foundation as well as donating memorabilia to the museum.

Other 2015 inductees in addition to Mr. Jackson:

- Joe Tronzo, former sports editor of the News-Tribune, who helped form many youth leagues and booster clubs in Beaver Valley.
- Teri Terconi, WPIAL and state champion in girls gymnastics at Beaver Falls in 1979. She was All-SEC at the University of Florida in 1984 on uneven bars, floor exercise and vault.

- Jack Damaska had a 17-year career in professional baseball as a player and manager 1957-1974, and was a 1963 St. Louis Cardinals teammate of Stan Musial.
- Justin Crepp, a 1998 graduate of Beaver Falls High School, is an assistant professor of physics at the University of Notre Dame. He designs and builds instruments for telescopes and in 2013 was named Kepler participating scientist — an elite group of 11 people.
- Ted Heath coached football at schools including Kansas State and the University of Louisville. He was on the coaching staff of the Canadian Football League's 1989 Grey Cup champion Saskatchewan Rough Riders.

Teams honored this year are the 1975 Beaver Falls baseball team WPIAL champions and the 1985 girls basketball team WPIAL and state champions.

The museum is a 25-by-25-foot room in the library. It contains autographed helmets, jerseys, game gear and other memorabilia, as well as plaques honoring the 19 people inducted in the past four years. It's open 10 a.m. to noon every Saturday, or by appointment by calling Mr. Higgins at 724-728-7399.

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