

## Alumni Association

*Keeping Ties with Our Alumni*



**TAYLOR**  
School District



**January 2021 Newsletter**

**W**e say goodbye to a challenging 2020 and look forward to a new year that will hopefully see an end to COVID-19.

**Happy New Year Alumni!**

## KEEPING UP WITH GRADS!

ROGER E. BECHTOL

As far as the Alumni Association knows, the only person to be a part of the opening of all three Taylor High Schools is Roger Bechtol...here is his story.  
*Roger E Bechtol: student,*

*teacher, coach. Roger likes to say that he "opened" all three High Schools. He entered the new Taylor Center High School as an eighth grader in the 1953-54 school year. The building was not completed until 1955. While a student, he earned 11 letters in football, basketball, and baseball, and was named "Male Athlete of the Year" his senior year.*

*Roger entered Eastern Michigan University in the fall of 1958, majored in physical education and minored in natural science. He played second base on the varsity baseball team for four years. In his junior year he was introduced to the sport of*

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gymnastics and competed in floor exercise and parallel bars.

After graduation he was hired by the Taylor School District. He taught science for one year at Brake Junior High while getting his Master's Degree. The following school year (64-65) saw the opening of J. F. Kennedy High School in April of 1965. Roger taught physical education and biology, and introduced the sport of gymnastics to the boys gym classes. The following year, (66-67) the boys competed as a gymnastics team. The sport grew and the 1970 team won the Class A State Championship, followed by winning it again in 1971, 1972, and 1973. He also coached the varsity baseball team.

In 1973-74, Roger transferred to the newly opened Truman High School. He coached cross-country in the fall, gymnastics in the winter, and varsity baseball in the

spring. The gymnastics team was the State Champion one more time and then the State dropped the sport in 1979.

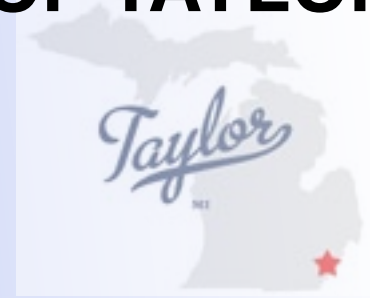
Roger began coaching the J.V. basketball team in the winter and continued coaching three sports per year, substituting boys golf for cross country, until he retired from teaching in 1997. The baseball field at Truman was named for him.

On a personal note, Roger married Carol, the Spanish teacher at Kennedy, in 1967. They have two children, David, a Phys. Ed. teacher at Truman (now known as Taylor High School) and Doreen, who is an assistant professor of graduate studies in Theater at Mary Baldwin University in Virginia.

Roger is a member of the Michigan High School Coaches Hall of Fame.

The Taylor Alumni Association congratulates Roger on an outstanding career and wishes him a long and happy retirement. 📖

# THERE IS A LOT HAPPENING IN THE CITY OF TAYLOR



## Blizzard of Oz

by Roseanna Hammons

The There is still time to attend as it is open through January 10 at Heritage Park. A wonderland filled with interactive high-tech laser shows, holiday displays and notable characters as families make their way through the historic Coan Lake area, Heritage Park Petting Farm and the Taylor Conservatory and Botanical Gardens.

Visitors will see full-building projections, more than 100 lighted Christmas trees, larger than life characters and more than 200,000 holiday lights in a true winter wonderland.



# DOWN MEMORY LANE:

## BACK TO THE 1980'S TCH

### DO YOU REMEMBER

**1980** — How could we forget the Powder Puff girls football game with the Seniors defeating the combined 10th & 11th grades 12-6. Lori Petrosky scored both of the Senior touchdowns.



Powder Puff Game

► Wrestlers captured the City Crown with convincing wins over both JFK and HST. Most valuable wrestler award went to Dan Young who also advanced to the State Regionals.

► Drama Club Play "Dracula" was a huge hit.



Wrestlers

**1981** — Memories of the Junior Prom will always be cherished. Fairlane Manor...Prime Rib Dinner...Dancing to the music of "Dialog" were precious moments.

► We remember the great Track Team winning the league and regional titles; went on to the State Meet and finished 3rd in the entire State and had All-State performances by Earl Jones, Jason Bryant, Larry Parnell, Ed Jones and Roy Jones.

How could we forget the fun at Roy's Ranch and riding horses out onto open trails.



Roy's Ranch

**1982** — Do you remember the Homecoming Parade theme "World Tourist Attractions". The seniors float Cinderella's Castle was the winner.



The Senior Float...Cinderella Castle

► National Honor Society sponsored the Spinster Dance and the profits went to the Penricton Center for the Blind.

► The 1982 TCH track team had a fantastic year finishing 2nd in the State led by All-American and Olympic hopeful Earl Jones.

**1983** — Homecoming Dance a huge success. Music for the dance was provided by the "Freelance Band".

► The 1983 Junior Miss Pageant chose Sherry Moran as Miss Taylor Junior. Linda Workman 1st runner-up and Pam Hensley was 3rd runner-up.

► The Rams were led by coach Van Kostegian, who helped make a super first-rate team.



Coach Van Kostegian & Ram Players

**1984** — The theme for the Homecoming was the Olympics. The class of 84's float was fourteen feet tall and 16 feet long. It was constructed at Kelli Markarian's home under the direction of Senior Class Advisor, Mickey Turcheck.

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► TCH Football Team was led by quarterback Ron Allen, who set school records for most yards passing and most touchdowns passing. Ron received honors as All-League Most Valuable Player and All-Area Quarterback. Also, receiving honors as All Area Players were Jeff Martin, Glenn Mitchell, Scott Ashe, Tim Moore, and Chris Snair.

► The Powder Puff game was won by the '84 class girls.



Powder Puff Team

1985 — The Senior Class of 1985 elected Tina Merwin, President, Ed Hosmer, Vice-President, Patti McGuckin, Secretary and Tom Zorn, Treasurer.

► Swim Team All-Area Honors were won by Tim Crozier, Dwayne Dutcher, Jim Leclair and Andy Carson.



Swim Team

► The 29th edition of the Rampage won a First Place Award.

1986 — Jacqueline Gwess elected Homecoming Queen and the court consisted of Deborah Armstrong, Beth Boike, Toni Almas and Rhonda Manderach.

► Ski Club has great times at hills such as Alpine. Numbers of members continued to climb.

► Pom-Pon squad attended summer camp at Hope College and came home with a fist full of ribbons.



Pom Squad

1987 — Seniors dominated Spirit Week-taking 1st place in "water balloon toss", "egg toss", "two minute skit" and piled up points in tug of war.

► The first Pep Band in seven years played at football and basketball games, pep assemblies, and other special occasions.

► Newly formed "After-Hours Club" provided members opportunities to see and visit

cultural events in Metropolitan Detroit going to theater, concerts and art exhibits.



After Hours Club

► Girl's Basketball team had an outstanding 21 wins & 3 losses and won the District tournament. Lisa Jamula scored 1341 points in her career and was awarded a full scholarship to Northern Michigan University.



Girls Basketball Team

1988 — The Ramage staff and advisor, "Big D" (Charlie Dickelman), had a great time preparing the 1988 Yearbook.

► Girl's Basketball team finished the season undefeated in league play. Awards went to Cathy Kemp MVP, Hustler to Wendy Jamula and Ms. Defense to Lynette Tikey.

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► SADD (Students Against Driving Drunk) became one of the biggest organizations with over 90 members.



SADD Members

**1989** — The Lady Rams had another tremendous basketball season ending in 1st place of the Tri-River League with a 14-0 record and a season record of 22 wins and 1 loss. They won City and District championships and reached the finals of the Regional before falling to Ladywood.

Coach and ex-TCH student, Deb Karabees, led the boy's swim team to an 8-1 season record; also won the News Herald Invitational.

Both Assistant Principals, Judi Gorski and Bill Teller, were graduates of Taylor Center High School.



Bill Teller & Judi Gorski



## WE HEARD FROM YOU!

### ► Judy White Warner TCH 1958

I was very impressed with the article on Ron Vespremi. Ron was my childhood neighbor who lived across the street from our family. I was amazed by all the positions he held. His parents would have been so very proud of him.

I am so happy I joined the Alumni Association and receive the monthly newsletter.

*Thanks, Judy, for your comments. They are greatly appreciated.*

## A LITTLE HUMOR

NOW FOR A LITTLE HUMOR DURING THESE CHALLENGING TIMES.

- ★ WHEN SHE SAW HER FIRST STRANDS OF GRAY HAIR, SHE THOUGHT SHE'D DYE.
- ★ THE GUY WHO FELL ONTO AN UPHOLSTERY MACHINE LAST WEEK IS NOW FULLY RECOVERED.
- ★ HOW CAN A SLIM CHANCE AND A FAT CHANCE BE THE SAME, WHILE A WISE MAN AND A WISE GUY ARE OPPOSITES?
- ★ SO, YOU THINK YOU KNOW EVERYTHING? I'LL BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT ALL 50 STATES ARE LISTED ACROSS THE TOP OF THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL ON THE BACK OF A \$5 BILL.
- ★ IF YOU WERE TO SPELL OUT NUMBERS, HOW FAR WOULD YOU HAVE TO GO TO FIND THE LETTER "A"? THE ANSWER IS ONE THOUSAND.

# LET'S MEET OUR LEADERS

## Newly elected school board member

### Rhonda Danaj

Hi all! I am Rhonda Danaj, retired Taylor Teacher and newly elected Taylor School Board Member. Not only am I a resident of Taylor, but I grew up here, too. Anyone remember Taylor Center Elementary? I went there and have many wonderful memories with some of the best teachers, like Joyce Smith, Jean Avery and Sandra Kyte, just to name a few. They inspired me to become a teacher.

I went on to Brake Jr. High where Mr. Caswell was one of my most impactful teachers, always raising the bar for his students. He was my teacher two years in a row and I still remember him telling us, "Nobody walks on water in my class." He meant no one could get an A, but in reality you could. You just had to work hard to get one!

Harry S. Truman is where I went to high school with more great memories. I earned a

swimming letter and a drama letter. Mr. Beekman was great! I was in the high school play, "The Odd Couple," and the mime show, "The Rainbow Connection." It was also in high school that I worked with POHI students and that inspired me to earn my Master's Degree in Special Education.

I taught for 30 years in Taylor, starting as a substitute teacher at all buildings, then becoming a 1st grade teacher at Myers. I also taught at McDowell, Johnson, Holland and Kinyon in kindergarten, 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades. Along the way, I met and worked with many exceptional staff members, but my fondest and most rewarding memories are with my students. I have lasting relationships with families. Parents have always been partners in education with teachers and it's always about what is best for our kids.

I also raised my daughter in Taylor. She went through Taylor Schools and is a proud graduate of Kennedy High. My dad, Bob Diel, served as a Taylor

Firefighter for 34 years, 14 of those as Fire Chief. My mom, Juanita, was our first teacher and homemaker. I have two siblings, Renee and Rob.

That brings me to where I am today. After retiring to take care of Dad, and then his subsequent passing, I still wanted to make a difference in our schools. I ran for Taylor School Board as part of a team for change and won. All decisions will be about putting our kids first. We will be transparent and accountable voices for our community, working with our government, businesses, groups and churches to provide the support needed. We will work with the experts to get what we need to provide innovative opportunities and make Taylor Schools the District of Choice. 📝



# OBITUARIES



*The Alumni Association members would like to extend their deepest sympathy to the family and friends of the former classmates mentioned below. You will forever be in our thoughts and prayers.*

Please Note: If we receive deaths from the past that are not listed in our newsletter, they will be posted on the "In Memoriam" section on our website. If you know of a deceased graduate that is not listed in the Memoriam section of our website please let us know the name, school, graduating class and date of passing.

## **John F Kennedy High**

Dennis Aune, Class of 1971 (passed November 18, 2020)

Mary Horen Thompson, Class of 1970 (passed November 6, 2020)

Ronald Pruitt, Class of 1986 (passed October 26, 2020)

## **Taylor Center High**

Greg Cornell, Class of 1965 (passed November 27, 2020)

Jim Huckestein, Class of 1960 (passed August 22, 2020)

Larry Sleep, Class of 1959 (passed December 8, 2020)

Wayne Avery, Class of 1958 (passed December 10, 2020)

Greg Digue, Class of 1974 (passed December 4, 2020)

Gail Gerou, Class of 1964 (passed December 12, 2020)

Wills Powell, Class of 1960 (passed December 12, 2020)

## **Truman High School**

Joe Pavitanis, Class of 1982 (passed November 22, 2020)

Colin MacArthur, Class of 1976 (passed December 15, 2020)

Jo Ann Paluszewski Foc, Class of 1977 (passed December 18, 2020)

For more information about the deceased and their families, please visit the alumni website [tayloralumni.org](http://tayloralumni.org) and click on "In Memoriam".