

## Alumni Association

*Keeping Ties with Our Alumni*



**TAYLOR**  
School District



March 2018 Newsletter

*Enhance the educational atmosphere of the Taylor School District for both the graduates and the school district.*



Vietnam War Memorial - bronze statues

## AN UNSUNG HERO

by Hank Llewellyn

Fifty years after his death, Donald David Wielkopolan, a Taylor Center High School Graduate of the Class of 1966, is remembered for his service to country and fellow man. This is an excerpt from an article sent to the News Herald.

My dictionary describes an unsung hero as, "A person who makes a substantive yet unrecognized contribution; a person whose bravery is unknown or unacknowledged."

January 18, 2018, marked the 50th anniversary of the passing of one of those unsung heroes, Donald D. Wielkopolan, who lost his life one morning on the Bong Son plains of Vietnam. Specialist Four Wielkopolan was one of

two we lost on that mission says Llewellyn.

Donald's primary job was working in the underground operations bunker for our commanding officer and was not directly involved in the daily missions of conducting the war as part of an air crew. However, when an assigned gunner for one of our most dangerous night missions fell ill, Donald volunteered to take his place. The purpose of the mission was to patrol the rivers, waterways and lakes of the coastal plains in an attempt to find the enemy



image source: vxmf.org

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moving supplies at night by boat or raft and to engage them.

When the radio crackled with word that they were taking fire and a bird was down with two of the five crew members missing, we automatically launched every available chopper in the company. I recall the men forming a line across the lake in chest deep water looking for pieces of the aircraft. Looking, looking for our men.

We found Donald first, his body trapped under what was left of the main section of the fuselage at the bottom of the lake.

Donald was assigned to Alpha Company, 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Division. Because of the contribution and bravery of men like Donald Wielkopolan, the battalion returned from Vietnam as the most decorated Army Aviation Unit from that war. Donald's helicopter unit was depicted in the book and movie "We Were Soldiers".

We who survived are in our 70's and beyond now. Donald remains in our minds as the



Donald David Wielkopolan

young soldier from Taylor Central High School looking much like today's seniors.

Donald is honored on



Panel 34E, Line 72 of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C.

The "Wall" (as the Memorial is known) in our nation's capital is a symbol that many revere and some require. For me, the honor and privilege of serving with all the men I served with burns brightly and fiercely within me. And my tribute to them is also my monument to them.

The faculty, students and alumni of the Taylor School District is proud of the service and sacrifice of their Patriot and Unsung Hero, Donald D. Wielkopolan. 🖊️

*Hank Llewellyn is a retired member of the U.S. Army who served alongside Donald, including the mission that claimed the life of his fellow soldier.*







## Headline News

From the Past

### Sports Hall of Fame Inductee -

#### Lisa Jamula Maki

September 26, 2003, Lisa Jamula Maki, 1987 Graduate of Taylor Center High School, was inducted into Northern Michigan University's Sports Hall of Fame.

One of the most outstanding performers in Wildcat women's basketball history, she remains Northern's all-time leading scorer with 1,699 points during her career with the 1988-91 squads. In addition, she is the second-leading rebounder in school history. In 1991 she captured Most Valuable Player and Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Player of the Year honors. Today Lisa teaches math and coaches basketball in Escanaba, MI.



#### Lisa Jamula Maki -Statistics

Basketball

Hall of Fame Class: 2003

1991 GLIAC Player of the Year

2nd All-time Rebounder (893)

All-time Leading Scorer (1,699 points)

Most Career Field Goals (665)

### September 10, 2006 — The 'Baumer' Bids Farewell'

Mike Baum, Taylor Center graduate of the class of 1967, only the second basketball coach in Kennedy history, hangs up the whistle. Baum took over as the head coach when Van Kostegian retired after coaching from 1965 to 1981. Baum is not retiring from teaching at Kennedy, nor is he retiring totally from coaching. He will continue as Kennedy's girl's softball coach. Baum said giving up the basketball job will allow him more time to devote to the softball team, which he has built into a Downriver power.

May the **IRISH** hills  
caress you.  
May her  
lakes and rivers  
bless you.  
May the **LUCK** of the  
**IRISH** enfold you.  
May the *blessings* of  
**SAINT**  
**PATRICK**  
behold you.

jucoolimages.com

# IN THE NEWS



## A New Bill introduced in the Michigan Legislature to Help Teachers

The "TeA+chers For Michigan Plan" bill was introduced by State Senator Hoon-Yung Hopgood (D-Taylor), a 1992 graduate of Harry S Truman High School.

According to Hopgood, the 22-bill legislative package is the first comprehensive investment in Michigan's educators in more than a decade that seeks to "prepare the best, attract the brightest and retain the finest Michigan educators." If the bill passes teachers would be rewarded, recruited and revered under a bill introduced in the Michigan Senate last week. The bill would provide signing bonuses for new teachers, stipends for student teachers assigned to economically disadvantaged districts and incentives and scholarships for students to enter the teaching profession. The bill would also mandate a ratio of one teacher for every 20 students in kindergarten through

the fourth grade and up to 10 years of student loan debt forgiveness for teachers who are in their first three years of teaching. 📖

# TeA<sup>+</sup>chers

FOR MICHIGAN

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## GOOD THINGS ARE HAPPENING IN THE TAYLOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### "Champions Before- and After-School Program"

Every day at Champions, our enriching program gives kids a safe place to exercise their brains and their bodies while having fun! For kids, Champions is a supportive place to make friends and explore their world!

Program Hours—Before school: 6:30 am until the start of school. After school: from school dismissal until 6:00 pm. 📖



## TAUGHT AND COACHED AT ALL THREE HIGH SCHOOLS

I asked Van Kostegian to provide me information about his career in the Taylor Schools System about his life before and after. What an outstanding coach and person he is. Below is what he wrote.

I was born March of 1927 to immigrant parents of Armenian heritage. I was Raised in Detroit and attended Southwestern High School and participated in football, basketball and baseball and was awarded nine Varsity Letters. I attended Michigan State, then served in the U. S. Army. Following World War II, I returned to Michigan State, played baseball and earned a BA degree. Later I earned my Masters and Specialist Degrees from the University of Michigan.

My first teaching and coaching was at Redford Union. I was the Varsity Basketball and Baseball coach as well as an assistant coach in Football.

In the fall of 1959, I accepted a teaching position at Taylor Center High School beginning my 30 plus years journey through Taylor Schools. I believe I am the only individual to have taught and coached at all three Taylor High Schools. Regarding teaching and coaching at all three High Schools, I can say each one was unique. Each school had it's own personality. Just what it was, I can't put my finger on it, but I deeply cared for each one. I became a "Ram", an "Eagle" and a "Cougar".

My longest tenure was at Kennedy High School. I taught physical education, was Director of Driver's Education and coached Varsity Basketball and Tennis. I can truly say I loved Kennedy High School. Wow! How can you say you love something that is constructed of steel, bricks, glass and cement. No, I'm talking about the awesome atmosphere, the environment that encased that structure, the

energy, the enthusiasm! The cohesiveness and bonding of the outstanding administration along with a great teaching faculty. Last but not least, the student body. All of the above could not have been achieved without the support of the Taylor Community. The support they gave to the education system and the enthusiasm & backing of our athletic teams were unsurpassed.

As for myself...personally, I have to thank all the great and not so great athletes that came under my supervision. I have to thank them for all the hours of practice, hard work, and sweat to develop the skills to participate in that sport. To help bring out the character that was instilled by their parents.

I only hope that I had a positive influence in their lives. Last but not least, I have to thank the parents who entrusted and put in to my hands their precious kids. I

hope I did not disappoint you.

After retirement, we spend some winters in Florida and summers at our cottage in the thumb.

Let me close by saying...

Let me sit at the side of the road where the race of men go by.

The men who are good, the men who are bad as I.

I would not sit in the Scorners Seat, or hurl the cynics ban

Let me sit by the side of the road and be a friend to man. ✍️

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## REMEMBERING PAST PRINCIPALS

### John F Kennedy's 4th Principal

I recall Ken Nelson, an administrator at Harry S Truman, who was in need of a class advisor (a non-paying position). He called in a teacher and told him what he needed and the reply was. "sure I will be happy to help you out and I have some good ideas about the class float for Homecoming"

I also recall Bob Haarala, who was an administrator at Taylor Center High, saying he had an instructor who was always agreeing to help out anyway he could. Bob told me he was

"An Administrator's Dream", willing to do what he could to help.

They were both talking about Tom Bluhm who became JFK's 4th Principal when Wayne Hamilton retired. When I first met this man, I was very impressed with his professional appearance and his devotion to his position. He spent long hours at Kennedy and put his all into the position.

A few days ago, I contacted Tom and asked if he would send me a couple of paragraphs about his career and life after retirement. This is what he provided:

I spent 38 years in the Taylor school system and truly enjoyed those years. The staffs were great and I found the students to be eager to learn and willing to work hard. I base those statements on my experiences as Class Advisor, Student Council, Stage Craft, Building Athletic Director, Coach of Girls Softball, Girls track, Boy's Track, Wrestling and Baseball. One of the most exciting coaching experiences was with the TCH 1990 Baseball Team as they won 29 games in a row and advanced to the State Final Four in Battle Creek.

I retired as Principal of JFK in 2009 and will always remember the experiences I had in those 38 years. I am now enjoying my time with wife Lynn, daughter Andrea and twin Grandson's Connor and Ryan. I am still coaching wrestling at Trenton High School—when I say "still" this is my 47th year in that position. ✍️



March 3rd

The "Dueling Pianos" event held this past year drew high praise from those attending. "Great Entertainment", "Really Enjoyed the Evening". So the Taylor Foundation is bringing back the "Dueling Pianos" 7 pm March 3, 2018. The show will be the chief fundraiser of the year. Tickets are on sale and the \$25 price includes pizza, soft drinks and a cash bar will be available. Must be 18 or older to purchase tickets. Full bar available at discounted prices. Table sponsorships are available, call Linda Newsome at 313-971-8440 for more information.

April 13th

Euchre Tournament fundraiser sponsored by the Taylor Alumni Association will be held at the American Legion Hall on Brest Road. Only 100 tickets will be sold. The \$20 price includes food, door prizes and a \$300 first place money prize. For tickets contact Judith LaFleur (313) 386-3106.

August 18th

JFK Class of 1978 40th reunion. Masonic Hall 23263 Goddard Road. Dinner and Dancing followed by a picnic in the park on Sunday, August 19th. The cost is \$35, please send check to "JFK Class Reunion" c/o Kathy Davis 11141 Westpoint, Taylor Mi 48180. For more info email Kathrynquiel2017@gmail.com.

October 6th

JKF Class of 1968's 50th Reunion. If planning to attend the cost is \$40. Please make checks to John F Kennedy Class Reunion and mail to Nancy Strong 35626 Pinecrest New Boston Mi 48164. If you have question please contact Nancy McVay Strong at 734-654-8395, Mary Burgraph Baugh 734-512-7272, or Lynn Carson Boughton at 517-902-4406.



## 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.*

### **Taylor Center High**

Lester Finkbinder, class of 1975, ( passed September 20, 2017)

Dale Herron, class of 1965, (passed February 10, 2018)

Larry James class of 1963, (passed February 22, 2018)

### **John F Kennedy High**

Jim Harris, class of 1970, (passed January 31, 2018)

Mike Mikulonis, class of 1967, (passed June 29, 2017)

### **STAFF**

Genevieve "Jenny" Patterson, Crossing Guard (passed January 22, 2018)

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