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2006 Bush Award Recipients Announced

EAST LANSING, Mich. – Aug. 11 – Returning home to perform labors of love as teachers, coaches and administrator at their high school alma maters, Janet Gillette and Wayne Welton share the attributes which make them the recipients of the Michigan High School Athletic Association's Allen W. Bush Award for 2006.

Each has served as teacher, coach and administrator during their tenures, Gillette at Comstock Park High School for 23 years, and Welton at Chelsea High School for 28 years. The two will be recognized at ceremonies during the month of September at their respective schools.

Al Bush served as executive director of the MHSAA for 10 years. The award honors individuals for past and continuing service to prep athletics as a coach, administrator, official, trainer, doctor or member of the media. The award was developed to bring recognition to men and women who are giving and serving without a lot of attention. This is the 15th year of the award, with the selections being made by the MHSAA's Representative Council.

“So many in education return to their alma matter, making their mark in adulthood as leaders at their old schools and in their communities after high school days where they were leaders as students and student-athletes – and this year’s Bush Award recipients are models for all to emulate,” said John E. “Jack” Roberts, executive director of the MHSAA. “Janet Gillette and Wayne Welton have made their high school days the best days of their lives as students and servant-leaders of students. We congratulate them on this award and wish them well in their further service to educational athletics.”

Here are brief biographical sketches of the 2006 Bush Award recipients:

Janet Gillette – Since walking through the doors of Comstock Park High School as a student, Gillette has been involved in the school’s athletic program as an athlete, coach or athletic administrator. She played four sports in high school, and returned to the school to begin coaching the girls tennis and softball teams while a junior in college. Following college, Gillette became a teacher at Comstock Park in addition to her coaching duties – which also included volleyball and middle school basketball during her tenure -- and became the school’s full-time athletic director in 1990.

(more)

2-2-2 – Bush Award Recipients

Under Gillette's leadership, Comstock Park has served as the host to numerous MHSAA postseason tournaments, including 10 Lower Peninsula Track and Field Finals, and three Girls Competitive Cheer Finals. She has also been active with the Michigan Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association, serving as a presenter at numerous conferences and developing a coaches handbook.

She has been recognized as an inductee into the Comstock Park Athletic Hall of Fame; Regional Athletic Director of the Year by the MIAAA; Athletic Director of the Year by the Michigan Competitive Cheer Coaches Association and the West Michigan Basketball-Football Association, and the Comstock Park Employee of the Year in 2004.

In the community, Gillette has served as a coach in the Northwest Little League and has been active with the Alpine Baptist Church as an AWANA Director and a Sunday School teacher. She earned an Associate's Degree from Grand Rapids Community College in 1976, where she also played basketball and softball, and a Bachelor's Degree in physical education from Grand Valley State University in 1978.

Wayne Welton – A three-sport performer at Chelsea High School, Welton was the quarterback of the school's 1971 football team which finished 9-0 and claimed a mythical Class B title. He also played basketball and baseball. Following college, Welton returned to Chelsea to begin a career in educational athletics which has spanned nearly 30 years as a teacher, coach and administrator.

As a baseball coach, Welton's teams have won more than 650 games, compiled a .750 winning percentage, claimed 15 conference titles and an MHSAA Class B crown in 1991. In his 18 years as the school's athletic director, he has been instrumental in the upgrading of Chelsea's athletic facilities to serve all students; authored one of the most comprehensive coaches handbooks in the state, and assembled a coaching staff composed of 95 percent faculty members – an astounding number.

Welton has been a leader in the area of sportsmanship initiatives, and has hosted Southeastern Conference Sportsmanship programs the past seven years. A true compliment to his leadership is that the school has received no negative officials reports concerning Chelsea coaches during the past three years.

A past president of the Michigan High School Baseball Coaches Association, he was inducted into that organization's Hall of Fame in 2005, named a Regional Coach of the Year on six occasions and statewide Coach of the Year in 1991. He is active in statewide and national athletic administrators associations, and in a variety of community activities. He earned his Bachelor's Degree from Central Michigan University in 1977, and his Master's Degree from Eastern Michigan University in 1983.

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3-3-3 – Bush Award Recipients

The MHSAA is a private, not-for-profit corporation of voluntary membership by over 1,800 public and private senior high schools and junior high/middle schools which exists to develop common rules for athletic eligibility and competition. No government funds or tax dollars support the MHSAA, which was the first such association nationally to not accept membership dues or tournament entry fees from schools. Member schools which enforce these rules are permitted to participate in MHSAA tournaments, which attract approximately 1.6 million spectators each year.

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