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2007 Bush Award Recipients Announced

EAST LANSING, Mich. – Sept. 4 – One of the up-and-coming leaders in school sports, and two long-time stellar administrators are the recipients of the Michigan High School Athletic Association's Allen W. Bush Award for 2007.

This year's recipients are: Chris Ervin, athletic director at St. Johns High School; Joe Haines, athletic Director at Grand Rapids Kenowa Hills High School; and William Newkirk, recently retired superintendent of Sanford Meridian Public Schools. The recipients of this year's awards will be recognized at local ceremonies this fall.

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 16th year of the award, with the selections being made by the MHSAA's Representative Council.

Here are brief biographical sketches of the 2007 Bush Award recipients:

Chris Ervin – Most of Ervin's educational career has been devoted to serving as an athletic administrator. For the last two years, he has been the athletic director at St. Johns High School, following seven years as athletic director and assistant principal at Carson City-Crystal High School that followed four years as athletic director at Webberville High School.

A 1990 graduate of Central Michigan University, from which he received his Master's degree in athletic administration in 1997, Ervin's first stop as Webberville also included duties as a physical education teacher and boys varsity basketball coach. Two of his teams captured Mid-State Athletic Conference championships. In 1998, he moved to Carson City-Crystal, where he also coordinated the district's career pathways program.

Ervin has also been active as a member of the Michigan Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association, where he was honored as a regional Athletic Director of the Year in 2003, and has received Five and Ten-Year Awards from that organization. He is also participated on numerous MHSAA and MIAAA committees and hosted a variety of MHSAA tournaments.

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“The Bush Award is an acknowledgement of extraordinary service and to be an encouragement to those who will be our future leaders,” said John E. “Jack” Roberts, executive director of the MHSAA. “Chris is an articulate and personable leader who leads by example as well as exhortation. He has vision and character. He makes everything and everyone around him better: his school, community, league and state associations. We are pleased to honor him with the Bush Award.”

Joe Haines – Nearly half of Haines career has been in service to the Kenowa Hills school director, where he has been the athletic director for the past 13 years, after serving for two years as a middle school principal and one year as a teacher.

Haines earned Bachelor’s degrees from Albion College in math and physical education, and later received a Master’s degree in administration from Eastern Michigan University. Prior to arriving at Kenowa Hills, his teaching career took him to stops at Mason, Napoleon, Jackson Lumen Christi, Holly and Galien. He also coached boys basketball along the way, receiving Class C Co-Coach of the Year in 1984-85 honors from the Associated Press while at Napoleon High School.

While at Kenowa Hills, he has initiated athletic opportunities for high school and middle school students in skiing, equestrian, dance, swimming and diving, water polo, gymnastics, girls competitive cheer, bowling, softball and girls soccer. He has been a tournament manager for a number of MHSAA events, a member of the MIAAA, and has been honored as a regional Athletic Director of the year. In the community, he is a member of the Walker Recreation Committee, the Kenowa Hills Education Foundation, and a volunteer coach in several youth sports.

“Joe Haines has worked hard to improve participation opportunities for young people, optimizing the mission of educational athletics,” Roberts said. “His service as a teacher-coach and an administrative leader has left a positive mark on his journey through the educational community. He is indeed a worthy recipient of the Bush Award.”

William Newkirk –Newkirk retired this past summer after 35 years serving the educational community, the last 11 at Sanford Meridian. He had previously been superintendent from 1991 to 1996 at Maple City-Glen Lake; spent 15 years as an assistant principal, athletic director and principal at Clare High School; and started his career with teaching positions at Leroy Pine River and White Cloud. Central Michigan University is where he earned his Bachelor’s, Master’s and Specialist’s Degrees.

He coached and was a registered official in baseball, basketball and football during his educational career. As an athletic administrator, he managed 37 MHSAA tournaments from the District through the Finals levels; and as a top-level district administrator, was involved in a variety of projects to improve the quality of education in every community in which he served.

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While principal at Clare, Newkirk was first elected to the MHSAA's governing board, the Representative Council, where his 19 years of service is third among current members. As a Council member, he has been elected on multiple occasions to serve as the Secretary/Treasurer of the Association, and sat on numerous committees, including the Finance Committee.

“Bill's leadership on the local and statewide levels has benefitted the entire educational community,” Roberts said. “Locally, he has been an engaged administrator, responsive to his constituent's needs in all areas – whether it be athletics or technology or other learning opportunities. He has been able to take his hands-on, can-do attitude into his position of leadership on the Representative Council to help this association of schools do great things. He has been a great friend to schools, and he will be missed. The Bush Award is a small way to say thanks to Bill Newkirk for his contributions.”

The MHSAA is a private, not-for-profit corporation of voluntary membership by over 1,600 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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