



# March 27, 2006 Wyandotte Distinguished Graduate Inductee



## Benjamin F. Yack Class of 1927

Although Benjamin Yack was not born in Wyandotte, he made a tremendous impact on our town. His family moved here in 1913 from Syracuse, New York. He was an outstanding high school athlete in football and basketball and he played baseball with the Michigan Alkali Team. He was a member of Roosevelt High School's graduation Class of 1927.

During the Depression, Ben attended Western Michigan University and held a variety of factory and substitute teaching jobs. He continued his interest in athletics and coached semi-pro football along with baseball and basketball.

Mr. Yack was named Wyandotte's first Recreation Director in 1936 and was instrumental in having lights installed at the baseball diamonds at Pulaski Park in 1939. After a stint in the Air Force from 1942-1945, Ben settled in Wyandotte with his wife, Gertrude, and sons Tom and Bob.

Mr. Yack is nationally recognized for developing the first version of T-ball to help younger athletes transition into baseball. He helped institute the annual Detroit Tiger Exhibition charity event that benefited area Sandlot baseball teams. He was a member and officer of many organizations including the Michigan Amateur Baseball Association, Michigan Recreation Association, and the National Recreation Association. Ben advocated good sportsmanship for athletes of all ages, including good conduct and respectful language.

Benjamin Yack's vision of a municipal athletic complex was realized with the construction of Memorial Park and Pool in 1954. Wyandotte's Yack Arena was named for him in 1969. He retired in 1973 and died in 1981, but his legacy lives on. He is a member of the Wyandotte Sports Hall of Fame and in 2005 he was named to the Michigan Recreation Hall of Fame.