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*Sweet Home
Alumni Association*



*Distinguished Alumni
Wall of Fame*

2019

*Induction Ceremony
Friday, November 1, 2019*

Our Distinguished Wall of Fame is clearly embedded into Sweet Home tradition. Tonight's recipients are successful in their own fields - whether it is in media, politics, or education. One common area links all three recipients: volunteering for their communities. Each one of the recipients selected an organization to dedicate time to in order to help others less fortunate. To think that their beginnings derived from Sweet Home High School is inspirational to all who celebrate with us tonight.



Nominations for these impressive inductees were collected in the spring of 2019. Through the aid of a small committee comprised of veteran and retired teachers, administrators, alumni board members, alumni, and community members, tonight's nominees will be inducted.

Behind every great person, a number of people have helped him / her achieve success. Thank you to friends, former teachers and family members of the inductees for accompanying them tonight and in supporting them in their passion to make a difference in their respective fields. The inductees have left an indelible mark on our school and community - one that will be commemorated for years to come.

Lisa LaBrake
Sweet Home Alumni Coordinator

Special thanks to the following people for their tireless efforts in ensuring that tonight was successful:

Roz Annunziato
Gary Bainbridge
Dave Barbalato
Kelli Bogacz
Debra Coniglio
Bruce Corris
Anthony Day
Don Feldmann
David Harrison
Hermann Studios
High School Custodial Staff
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Lisa LaBrake
Mike Lopardi
Scott Martin
Trey Measer & Bee Group Newspapers
Pat Mergenhausen
Mike Morrow
Dan Murphy
Heidi Mussachio
Kristina Pinkowski
Tom Rackl
Shevonne Ramadan-Sikes
Dave Sherman
Darcy Spengler
Justin Sullivan
Roey Tacca
Steve Weingarten

Emcees for the evening:
Melissa Holmes, Class of 2000
WGRZ-TV

Jessica Yankelunas Class of 2003



Jessica Yankelunas, Class of 2003, was very active during her four years at Sweet Home High School. She was active in student government serving as Junior Class vice president and Senior Class president during the 2002-03 school year. She was also a two-sport athlete, competing in lacrosse and soccer, a member of the school's Mock Trial team and active in the music program.

Following graduation, Jessica attended the University at Buffalo and earned bachelor degrees with honors in both English and Communication. She was inducted into the Lambda Pi Eta Communication Honor Society and The National Society for College Scholars. While in school, Jessica worked at the assignment desk for local ABC affiliate WKBW Channel 7 and interned at the "NBC Today Show" and "NBC Late Night with Conan O'Brien" where she assembled scripts for production, assisted in rehearsals and reviewed the show open with Conan.

After working for two years as PR Newswire and production associate for the "Tyra Banks Show", Jessica was offered the producer position for "The Morning Show" in Sydney, Australia. She stayed in Australia for two years during which time she produced "Australia's Next Top Model", "The X Factor Australia" and "The Today Show".

Jessica returned to New York City in 2011 to become the producer of the "Anderson Cooper Daytime Talk Show". In her two years with the show, Jessica booked guests, wrote scripts and produced show segments. From there, she went on to become producer of the "Bethenny Frankel Daytime Talk Show" from 2013-2014.

Since 2014, Jessica has served as producer of the "Dr. Oz. Daytime Talk Show". In her current role, Jessica develops concepts for daily segments, produces studio demonstrations, facilitates celebrity appearances and co-hosts a number of web sessions. Jessica was recognized for her efforts by being awarded a Daytime Emmy Award in both 2016 and 2017.

Outside of her professional responsibilities, Jessica has served as media coordinator for the Special Olympics in New South Wales, Australia and was a member of the board of the National Organization of Women. She has also been a huge part of the community outreach efforts of Dr. Oz including the Breast Cancer Research Foundation and Endometriosis Foundation of America.

Jessica and her husband, Jordan, have one older son, Liam, and welcomed twins Sydney and Jack earlier this Fall.

PROGRAM



Sweet Home Distinguished Alumni Wall of Fame Induction Ceremony *Friday, November 1, 2019*

6:30pm Music and Check-In

6:45pm Welcome & Introductions, Melissa Holmes, Class of 2000

- ◆ Stephen Edgar presents
Judith Hagg Edgar, Class of 1972
- ◆ Heather (Kennedy) Paolucci, Class of 2002, presents
James Kennedy, Class of 2007
- ◆ Jenna (Reid) DePasquale, Class of 1990, presents
Jessica Yankelunas, Class of 2003
- ◆ 7:45pm Closing Remarks, Lisa LaBrake, Alumni Coordinator
Refreshments Served

Judith Hagg Edgar Class of 1972



Judith Hagg Edgar, Class of 1972, loved her experience at Sweet Home High School and one of her goals as an educator was to provide her students with a memorable school experience.

Judy's path to a 41 year career in education began following her graduation from Buffalo State in 1976 where she majored in Secondary English Education. She earned her masters degree in Communicative Disorders from Johns Hopkins University in 1981.

Over the years, Judy has served as a teacher, department chair, assistant principal and executive assistant to two superintendents and the Board of Education of Baltimore County Public Schools. She also worked in the Maryland Department of Education in the Division of Special Education as a family support liaison, helping parents of disabled children receive special education services. She also served as an auditor to ensure that special education students across Maryland received appropriate educational opportunities.

Judy served as principal at the Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center where she worked to replace non-credit, low-level courses with high school credit earning courses. The majority of her career was spent as principal for the Cantonville Center for Alternative Studies in Maryland. Under Judy's leadership, the school was recognized as a local, state and national model for alternative education. The US Department of Education identified Cantonville Alternative as one of nine national models in the United States in 1996 and was cited in a number of state and national publications for its success in alternative education. In addition, the school received a second place award in the Juvenile Crime Prevention Program sponsored by Maryland's Attorney General, J. Joseph Curran in September 1998. She often went above and beyond to provide her students with the best experience possible. She implemented an adventure education model where students could earn physical education credits by taking part in activities such as kayaking and mountain biking.

Judy has also worked as an adjunct professor and lecturer at Towson University specifically working with aspiring teachers and building administrators. She furthered that work as a coach in Maryland governor's Promising Principal Academy. From 2014-15, Judy worked on programs to prepare current assistant principals across the state of Maryland to become effective building leaders.

Outside of the classroom and principal's office, Judy and her husband Stephen own a horse farm in Monkton, Maryland. She is also an active board member of the Sparks Glencoe Community Planning Council, a local land preservation community coalition and a lifetime member of the Sweet Home Alumni Association.

James Kennedy Class of 2007



To all who know James Kennedy, Class of 2007, it was no surprise that he entered into a career path of serving others. While at Sweet Home, Jim was a two sport athlete, but was also a leader in student government, National Honor Society, and Natural Helpers. He was very well respected by his peers, teachers, teammates and staff at Sweet Home.

Following graduation, Jim attended St. John Fisher where he graduated Suma Cum Laude with a degree in Political Science in 2011. While at Fisher, Jim also served on the student government executive board for three years and was elected Senior Class vice president. His service to the community expanded as Jim volunteered over the course of two years to rebuild the New Orleans community following Hurricane Katrina. He also volunteered extensive time to Camp Good Days and Carly's Club and was recognized by the College for his efforts with the Ann B. and Martin F. Birmingham Volunteer Recognition Award, a \$5,000 scholarship awarded to a student who gives back to the Rochester community.

While other job opportunities presented themselves, Jim decided to stay close to his roots and accept a legislative aide position for Senator Tim Kennedy in 2011. In his two years as aide to Senator Kennedy, he often wrote legislation, ran the Senator's schedule and often took meetings on the Senator's behalf. Jim was part of the team that worked with the Senator on the New York State Marriage Equality Act that was passed in 2011. In January 2013, Jim was promoted to the position of Director of Community Relations for the Senator and moved back home to Buffalo. It was in this position that Jim anchored the Senator's community outreach programs and oversaw the intern program in both Buffalo and Albany. For his efforts, Jim was recognized as a "30 Under 30 Buffalo Changemaker".

In late 2014, Jim took a job as the Regional Director for Senator Kirsten Gillibrand. Among other things, he focused on economic development for the Senator and worked closely with many organizations including The Buffalo Urban League and Junior Achievement of WNY Young Professionals Board.

Recently, Jim took the opportunity to leave politics and take on the role of Director of Government and Community Relations for Roswell Park Cancer Institute. In this new role, Jim will be advocating for issues relating to research and development at Roswell Park, working closely with many of the political contacts he has made over the years.

In whatever role he has had, Jim has always kept Sweet Home in mind. He has hosted former Sweet Home students as interns and has arranged for key political figures to visit and speak with current Sweet Home students.

Jim and his wife, Amanda Harding (Class of 2007), have an Australian Shepherd dog named Penny.