

*Sweet Home
Alumni Association
Distinguished Alumni
Wall of Fame*

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20  13

*Induction Ceremonies
Friday, November 1, 2013*

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

Craig Allwes
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Heidi Mussachio
Kristina Pinkowski
Joleen Reinholz
Dave Sherman
Darcy Spengler
Roey Tacca
Steve Weingarten

Emcees for the evening:
Don Feldmann & Lisa LaBrake

Our Distinguished Wall of Fame is in it's fourth year, and is already embedded into Sweet Home tradition. Tonight's recipients are successful in their own fields - whether it is in journalism, small business, professional and amateur athletics, or military service. 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 2013. 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 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

PROGRAM



Sweet Home Distinguished Alumni Wall of Fame Induction Ceremonies

Friday, November 1, 2013

6:30pm Food & Refreshments Served

7:00pm Welcome & Introductions, Lisa LaBrake, Alumni Coordinator

- ◆ Paul Strefeler, '90 presents
Sally Kidman Kus, Class of 1966
- ◆ Pat Mergenhausen, Past Alumni Coordinator &
Dr. Kenneth Goldstein, '69 present
David M. Gordon, Class of 1971
- ◆ Jack and Andrea Mennes present
Colonel Brian J. Mennes, Class of 1984
- ◆ Pat Mergenhausen, Past Alumni Coordinator &
Alan Camhi, retired High School English teacher, presents
Michael A. Mudd, Class of 1986
- ◆ Karen Galli, Athletics secretary, presents
Melissa Holmes, Class of 2000

8:00pm Closing Remarks
Cake & Coffee Served

Melissa Holmes Class of 2000



Melissa Holmes, Class of 2000, is currently the co-anchor of Channel 2 News Daybreak which airs every weekday morning.

Following graduation from Sweet Home, Melissa moved down the Thruway to attend Syracuse University where she majored in broadcast journalism at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications where she graduated Summa Cum Laude. After Syracuse, Melissa traveled to London and worked for a short time for Sky News. When she returned stateside, Melissa went to work at Syracuse's WTVH-5 as a producer and WSYR-9 as a reporter and anchor before returning home to report in Buffalo at WIVB-Channel 4 in 2005.

In her time as a reporter, Melissa has covered many major news stories including the search for Ralph "Bucky" Phillips, the surprise October storm, the arrest and conviction of the bike path rapist, the crash of Flight 3407 and City Grill murders. She earned a New York State Emmy in 2009 for her morning reporting coverage of the October Storm. In 2013, Medaille College Department of Communications honored Melissa with the Female News Anchor of the Year Award.

Melissa is also dedicated to helping many local charities including the Hunter's Hope Foundation, Make-A-Wish, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, Children & Family Services, Food Bank of Western New York and the volunteer fire service.

David M. Gordon Class of 1971

David M. Gordon, Class of 1971, through his own self-determination and keen business savvy, has developed a multitude of successful business ventures.

Probably the most notable of these ventures is Dave's Market & Christmas Wonderland retail store in Cheektowaga. Over the last 30 years, the store has become Western New York's #1 destination store for holiday decorations and seasonal merchandise.

David's main company, Gordon Companies Inc., moved online under the name of ChristmasCentral.com in 2001. During the last 12 years, the company's website presence has achieved remarkable growth and been acclaimed to be one of the fastest growing private companies in the United States as recognized by INC Magazine.

David is also owner of the Creekside Banquet facility in Cheektowaga, purchasing it from its original owners in the mid-1980s. Since then thousands of weddings, bridal showers, confirmation and retirement parties, corporate meetings, company picnics have used the magnificent venue to host their affairs.

Most recently, David is one of the driving forces of the City of Buffalo's only new subdivision in over 50 years - the Colvin Estates. David worked with the City of Buffalo and gained approval for a 126 lot family home subdivision. Since ground-breaking less than a year ago, over 30 lots have been sold.

Away from his business ventures, David is heavily involved with numerous local charities including March of Dimes, Variety Club, Food Bank of Western New York, Hospice, the Jewish Federation and St. Luke's Mission.



Colonel Brian J. Mennes Class of 1984

Colonel Brian Mennes, Class of 1984, graduated from The United States Military Academy and was commissioned as an Infantry Officer in May 1988. After attending the Infantry Officer Basic Course at Fort Benning Georgia, his first assignment was with the 7th Infantry Division (Light) at Fort Ord, CA, where he served as a Platoon Leader, a Support Platoon Leader, Logistics Officer for the 4th Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, and as the Detachment Executive Officer for the Division Long Range Surveillance Detachment, 107th Military Intelligence Battalion. During his time as a platoon leader, Colonel Mennes deployed in support of Operation Just Cause.

Following the completion of the Infantry Officer Advanced Course at Fort Benning in 1993, he served as the Plans Officer for 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, and commanded Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division in the Republic of Korea. He then gained assignment to 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment serving as the Battalion Adjutant, Assistant Operations Officer and Commander of Alpha Company.

After completing the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth and obtaining a Masters in Military Art and Science, Colonel Mennes served as the Operations Officer for 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, and the Brigade Operations Officer for 325th AIR, 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, NC. Remaining on Fort Bragg he transitioned to the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) serving as one of the primary Operational J3 Planners for the initial operations in Afghanistan and as the lead planner for the Iraq Campaign. Following three combat deployments with JSOC, he returned to the 82nd Airborne Division as the 325th AIR Regimental Executive Officer in Baghdad, Iraq.

In summer 2004 Mennes became the Deputy Director, and later the Director, of the Simon Center for the Professional Military Ethics at West Point. In 2006, he returned to 82nd Airborne Division commanding the 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, deploying to Afghanistan where they served as the ISAF Commander's Theater Tactical Force. Mennes then commanded the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment. After deploying with them to both Iraq and Afghanistan, Brian assumed command of the 4th Brigade, 82d Airborne Division and deployed with them to Kandahar, Afghanistan in support of RC SOUTH.

Colonel Mennes is currently serving as an Army War College Fellow at the Institute of World Politics and has been awarded the Legion of Merit (3), the NATO Meritorious Service Medal, the Bronze Star Medal (5), Defense Meritorious Service Medal, and has earned the Ranger Tab and the Master Parachutist Badge.



Michael A. Mudd Class of 1986



Michael A. Mudd, Class of 1986, is one of the few Sweet Home student-athletes who has continued developing his academic and athletic talents at the collegiate and professional levels as a player, coach and top-level administrator in his chosen sport.

Michael most recently served as the president of the San Jose Sharks American Hockey League franchise in Worcester, Massachusetts. He oversaw the overall business operations of the franchise, managing the corporate, ticket, marketing, community relations, public relations, merchandise and broadcasting departments. He was directly involved in the relocation of the franchise from Cleveland, Ohio to Worcester. In 2011, he was named the American Hockey League's most outstanding executive. He also served as the Project Manager for the 2009 AHL All-Star Classic in Worcester and was a member of several league wide committees.

He earned his bachelor's degree in Economics from St. Lawrence University where he played varsity hockey and baseball and his Master's degree in Sports Management from Miami University. He was inducted into the Sweet Home Athletic Hall of Fame in 2006. He also played professionally, as a goaltender, in the St. Louis Blues organization.

In his hometown, he is a member of the Board of Directors for the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, March of Dimes, Devereaux Center, and the Worcester Research Bureau. He has also been a guest speaker at several college seminars around New England.

Michael is also a member of the Class of 2006 inductees into the Sweet Home Athletic Hall of Fame and the Class of 1999 inductees into the St. Lawrence University Athletic Hall of Fame.

Sally Kidman Kus Class of 1966



Sally Kidman Kus, Class of 1966, has a record as a high school volleyball coach that is unrivaled, matching her dedication to this great sport.

Sally began her teaching career at Sweet Home in 1970 and shortly thereafter was called upon to coach girls' volleyball. With a background in field hockey and basketball, she initially resisted, and only reluctantly acquiesced. This decision to become coach turned into the most remarkable success story in Western New York scholastic sports history.

Over the next 23 years, Kus' Lady Panthers compiled a staggering record of 792 wins and 29 losses. Those wins were the foundation for 15 consecutive Far West Regional Titles, 20 consecutive Section VI Class A titles and the first six Western New York State Championships awarded (1990-1995). In 1996, Volleyball Magazine recognized the Sweet Home program as the nation's best in the sport's 100-year history. The single most memorable accomplishment of Kus' squads was undoubtedly the 292-match winning streak that spanned eight undefeated campaigns from 1978-1987.

Sally was the first coach of the Empire State Games team in 1978 and was recognized as the Regional, New York State and National Coach of the Year in 1987. She received the inaugural Medallion of Merit from the National Volleyball Hall of Fame in 1996 and was inducted into the Great Buffalo Sports Hall of Fame in 1997.

Sally also has eight seasons of coaching at the collegiate level with Daemen College and the University at Buffalo. She founded the Cheetah Junior Olympic Development Program to perpetuate the growth of volleyball in Western New York.

Sally's focus has always been more attuned to the girls she coached rather than personal accolades, and she is most proud of the more than 70 full athletic scholarships awarded to players in the Sweet Home program over the years and the six New York State Scholar-Athlete Teams she has produced.