

Mankato East High School

WALL OF DISTINCTION



Class of
2024

Shereen Askalani Clemens
Craig Dahl
Nancy Gullickson Lynch
John Otis

SEPTEMBER 27, 2024



SHEREEN ASKALANI CLEMENS

1996 Graduate | Wall of Distinction Inductee • Class of 2024

Shereen received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Minnesota State University, Mankato, graduating Magna Cum Laude, with majors in Political Science and Speech Communication. She received her Juris Doctorate in 2002 from the Hamline School of Law. After earning her law degree, she worked at the Ramsey County Attorney's Office for the next fourteen years, working in the Child Support Enforcement, Juvenile, and Criminal Divisions. As an Assistant Ramsey County Attorney, she prosecuted criminal sexual conduct, child abuse, domestic assault, and homicide cases. Shereen received the County Attorney Recognition of Excellence Award-- Outstanding Performance, 2005. In 2016, Shereen was appointed by Governor Mark Dayton, and elected in 2018, to the position of Hennepin County District Court Judge, serving as the trial court judge for the Fourth Judicial District, and she remains on the bench today.

Professional organizations to which Shereen has been a member include: Minnesota Supreme Court Juvenile Rules Committee, Fourth Judicial District Domestic Violence Steering Committee, Juvenile Delinquency Eliminating Racial Disparities Committee, Fourth Judicial District Equal Justice Committee, Minnesota District Judges Association, Fourth Judicial District Family Violence Council Co-Chair, and Minnesota Board of Judicial Standards (appointed by Gov. Walz).

In addition to her legal career, Shereen has volunteered her time in many ways to the community. She is a past member and president of the Minnesota State University—College of Social and Behavior Science Board. She also gives of her time as a high school and college debate, speech, and mock trial judge, and a mentor for the St. Thomas School of Law and Hopkins High School Professionals Providing Experience for Life. Shereen also volunteers for the Wayzata Girls Traveling Basketball program, Girls on the Run, National Charity League, and the Anne Bancroft Foundation Grant Committee.



CRAIG DAHL

2003 Graduate | Wall of Distinction Inductee • Class of 2024

Craig Dahl was one of the most accomplished three-sport athletes at Mankato East, but it was football that determined much of his future. He attended North Dakota State University, majoring in mechanical engineering. He was a four-year starter on the football team and was named to the All-Great West Conference. Drafted into the NFL by the New York Giants, Craig played strong safety for the Giants as they won the Super Bowl. Craig continued his career with the St. Louis Rams, followed by the San Francisco 49ers. He closed out his nine-year NFL career with the New York Giants. His NFL statistics were most impressive---229 tackles, 4 forced fumbles, 4 sacks, 17 pass deflections, and 5 interceptions.

After retiring from football, Craig transitioned into business. He began with the Tailwind group in Mankato and expanded his ventures to Dallas, Texas, where he and his wife, Breelyn, live with their two sons. His business interests include property development, with projects such as a retail strip center in Dallas, short-term rental properties in Oklahoma, and a medical device distribution company, Advanced Medical Solutions.

Craig's commitment to philanthropy is evident through his various contributions. He has supported youth football programs in Mankato by coaching and donating equipment, established an endowment at NDSU for math and science scholarships, and engaged in charitable work with Operation Homefront and the 49ers' outreach program. In Dallas, he helps veterans with war injuries and people with disabilities to cope with everyday life, reflecting his belief in positively impacting others.

At home, Craig and his family enjoy their ranch near Dallas, where they raise cattle. He is actively involved in his sons' activities, coaching their soccer, football, lacrosse, and T-ball teams. Craig's blend of athletic success, business acumen, and philanthropic efforts underscores his dedication to making a meaningful difference in both his professional and personal life.



NANCY GULLICKSON LYNCH

1979 Graduate | Wall of Distinction Inductee • Class of 2024

Nancy Gullickson Lynch

Nancy attended Bethany Lutheran College earning an Associate of Arts degree, and followed that with a Bachelor of Science degree from MSU, Mankato; a Master of Arts degree in Educational Administration from California State U., San Bernardino; and a Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership from California University of La Verne.

Nancy began her career as an elementary school teacher in California, spending nine years in the classroom. From there she moved into administration, first as a principal and later as superintendent—thus not only impacting students, but also teachers and staff for many years. As Chuck Kind said, “Her legacy will last for a long time for the great work she did in communities in California.” During her career in education, Nancy received many honors including Teacher of the Year in Palm Springs, Administrator of the Year in Beverly Hills,

and Administrator of the Year for Region Two in California. She provided the leadership in several state-wide conferences and forums on education. Her participation in several educational organizations include: California School Administrators, California Superintendents Assoc., California School Board Assoc., North Coastal Consortium for Special Education in CA., and AASA (National School Superintendents Assoc.)

Among the many contributions outside of her educational career, Nancy was co-founder in starting the charity, Give Back to Humanity, an organization focused on improving the lives of children and their families in impoverished areas of the world. This has included building schools in Belize, Kenya, Zambia, India, and Uganda, as well as furnishing free dental and health clinics in the outreach. Nancy and her husband, Tom, have also provided significant funding to the charity. The organization is 100% nonprofit, made up of volunteers, and every dollar donated goes directly to the project. Nancy and Tom are involved in the day-to-day operations, including fundraising and administration. They are constantly traveling to the various countries and are involved directly working with the staff and children that they serve. As a staff person commented, “the kids look to Nancy and Tom as Grandma and Grandpa!!!”



JOHN OTIS

1980 Graduate | Wall of Distinction Inductee • Class of 2024

John Otis

John Otis got his start in journalism at Macalester College where he was a writer and arts editor for the student newspaper and graduated with an English degree in 1985. He spent his junior year abroad at Westfield College in London, studying Shakespeare and writing for the London Student newspaper. He then interned at the Twin Cities Reader and freelanced for City Pages, writing about Minneapolis politics, the AIDS epidemic, and sports as well as a cover story exploring why The Beatles’ 1965 concert at Met Stadium was their only U.S. show that failed to sell out.

For the past 35 years John has reported on Latin America, often taking serious personal risks to cover guerrilla wars, drug cartels, the destruction of the Amazon rainforest, and dictatorships in Venezuela and Nicaragua. He worked for The Houston Chronicle, Miami Herald, UPI, and Time Magazine and is currently the Latin American correspondent for NPR. As a consultant for the Committee to Protect Journalists, John is also a leader in the defense of press freedom. He has investigated death threats, arrests, and killings of journalists in Latin America and went undercover in Cuba to explore how journalists on the island evade government censorship. He covered U.S. military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and is the author of the book “Law of the Jungle,” a history of Colombia’s guerrilla war.

John frequently speaks about Latin American politics and press freedom at universities and has volunteered for education and house-building projects, and for a program to prevent youth recruitment into drug gangs. He has been honored by the Inter American Press Association and the Overseas Press Club of America, and won Columbia University’s 2024 Maria Moors Cabot Award for distinguished reporting on Latin America.

Mankato East High School

WALL OF DISTINCTION

2020 Inductees

Jane Gilles
Chad Surprenant
Matthew Swanson
Steven Towner

2022 Inductees

Charles Kind
Jane Maschka
Thomas Miller
Jean Taylor

Throughout the history of Mankato East High School, numerous individuals have made a significant and lasting impact on advancing the recognition of Mankato's educational community. Individuals who have made a difference, been successful, and given unselfishly to make the world a better place deserve to be nominated for induction into the Mankato East High School Wall of Distinction.

PURPOSE

- To recognize the achievements of Mankato East High School graduates
- To demonstrate incentives and provide role models for East students

CRITERIA FOR ELIGIBILITY

1. Graduated from Mankato East High School a minimum of 15 years prior to the nomination
2. Exemplified ethical behavior and moral character during or following their high school career as a credit to MEHS or the community
3. Distinguished themselves in one or more of the following areas after high school
Accomplishments in the arts and/or academic fields • Humanitarian endeavors • Professional career accomplishments and achievements
Community service • Athletic accomplishments on the college or professional levels • Distinguished military service
Exceptional contributions to School District #77
4. Wall of Distinction recognition may be given posthumously

PROCEDURES

1. The induction ceremony takes place every even-numbered year on Homecoming Day.
2. Nominations may be submitted by East alumni, family members, faculty/District 77 employees, or friends of an East graduate.
3. Nominations must be submitted on an official nomination form available at Mankato East High School or on the MEHS website.
<https://ehs.isd77.org/about-our-school/alumni-wall-of-distinction>
4. Corroborating data (news articles, notices, photos, etc.) may be submitted with the form.
5. No more than two letters of recommendation may be included supporting why this individual is worthy of the honor. Please limit each letter to ONE typewritten page.
6. Nominations for the next class of inductees (2026) must be submitted no later than October 15, 2025.

Should the nominated candidate not be selected in the first year of consideration, the nomination will automatically be kept on file and will be considered by the selection committee for future inductions. Additional documentation and information may be submitted for future consideration.

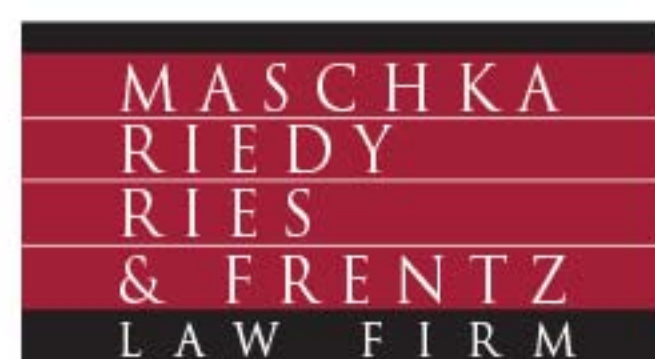
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The Wall of Distinction award was designed by East alumni, built in part by East current students and staff, and made possible by local business owners and alumni.