



## **BATAVIA PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT 101**

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### **BPS101 and the BPS Hall of Honor Committee Announce 2016 Hall of Honor Inductees**

**April 12, 2016 (Batavia, IL)** - On Thursday, September 15, 2016, Batavia Public School District 101 will welcome eight individual inductees into its Hall of Honor at Batavia High School.

The BPS Hall of Honor was initiated by the Batavia Foundation for Educational Excellence and BPS101 to promote pride in Batavia Public Schools and to honor alumni, faculty, and friends who have made outstanding accomplishments in their communities and personal lives since they have been associated with District 101.

Six of the eight inductees will be installed as Batavia High School Alumni, one will enter the Hall of Honor as a BPS101 Staff Member, and one will be installed as a Friend of Batavia for loyal support and dedication to BPS101.

“The Hall of Honor is a celebration of exemplary alumni and friends of Batavia Public School District 101 who have distinguished themselves in their professional and/or personal lives since high school,” said Nan Phillips, BPS Hall of Honor committee chairperson and Batavia Foundation for Educational Excellence Board Member. “The inductees are significant role models who encourage our students to reach for greatness in and outside of the classroom, and to be of service in their community.”

The BPS101 Hall of Honor induction ceremony will take place on Thursday, September 15, 2016, 6:30 p.m., at the Batavia Fine Arts Centre located at Batavia High School (Wilson St. entrance). Because the awards ceremony will be part of Homecoming Week, Hall of Honor inductees will also be recognized at the Homecoming Parade on Wednesday, September 14 and the football game on Friday, Sept. 16.

#### **About the Inductees**

##### **Batavia High School Alumni**

**Lori Anderson Gregorski (1986):** Lori Anderson Gregorski graduated from Eastern Illinois University and began her career in media sales for Shaw Newspapers (*Kendall County Record*, *Kane County Chronicle*, *Kane County Business Journal* and the *Northwest Herald*) and Paddock Publications (*Daily Herald*). She was an active member of Bethany Lutheran Church and a member of the adult choir. In

2004, Gregorski had an opportunity with Cox Ohio Publishing and moved to Dayton, Ohio. There, she served on the board of directors for the Ronald McDonald House and Coffman YMCA. During the economic downturn, she began running and became actively involved with the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's "Team IN Training" program. Through this program, she completed multiple half and full marathons while raising money for the organization. During this time, she was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. While MS slowed her down, she continued to work to raise awareness of MS and raise money for both the National Multiple Sclerosis Society and Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. In 2015, she was honored with The Joel Kahn Award of Courage by the Ohio Valley Chapter of the National MS Society. This award is given to a person living with MS who works tirelessly to change the world for others affected by MS. She recently made a career change and accepted a position with the National Multiple Sclerosis Society as the Senior Development Manager. Gregorski continues to encourage others to share their stories and hopes to one day complete the Chicago Marathon—the race she was training for when diagnosed with MS. Gregorski and her husband, Tony, have two children, Shelby and AJ. They live in Springboro, Ohio.

**Richard W. Hansen (1955):** In 1940, Richard Hansen's grandfather, W.C. Furnas, moved his family to Batavia and founded the Furnas Electric Company. Hansen attended Batavia schools from kindergarten through high school. He graduated from Purdue University and after graduation served in the U.S. Naval Reserves from 1961 to 1964 as Lieutenant Junior Grade on the USS Cimarron and at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station. Hansen returned to Batavia and, in 1966, began his career at Furnas Electric Company, which at that time was a \$10 million manufacturing company of special electrical motor control equipment. In 1972, he became president and in 1977, he became Chairman and CEO and served in that position until the company was purchased by Siemens Energy & Automation of Georgia in 1996. During those years, the company grew from \$10 million to \$140 million and was recognized within the industry most notably for its many product innovations, some of which set industry standards in motor control centers, electronic motor start devices and electronic overload relays. Hansen was a founding member of the Batavia Foundation for Educational Excellence and his family's Foundation, now known as the Hansen-Furnas Foundation, has awarded more than \$6 million for charitable causes and educational scholarships for local students. Hansen also served 20 years on the board of directors of the Experimental Aircraft Aviation Foundation, focusing on teaching youth about aviation and was a member of the Illinois Math & Science Academy Development Committee. He and his wife, Joanne, have two children, Scott and Lisa, who attended Batavia schools.

**Ellen Skirmont Diffenbaugh (1934) deceased 1986:** In the 1940s, Ellen Diffenbaugh was part of a team of laboratory technicians that worked for the University of Chicago on the Manhattan Project. The Manhattan Project was a research and development project led by the United States that produced the first nuclear weapons during World War II. During those years, Diffenbaugh was sent to set up the lab as the chief medical technologist at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and Los Alamos, New Mexico, where the Atomic Bomb was constructed. The lab was responsible for keeping track of the effects of radiation on the scientists. After leaving the project, she spent 15 years as chief of the medical and technical department at Argonne National Laboratory. She also worked part-time at Skokie Valley Community Hospital and was a volunteer at Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center. Diffenbaugh was born and raised in Batavia. Her first language was Lithuanian and she did not learn English until she started school. After graduating

from Batavia High School, she received her undergraduate degree at Valparaiso University in 1938 and completed her medical technology training in St. Louis.

**George Von Hoff (1940) deceased 2010:** George Von Hoff started his academic career at Louise White Elementary School in Batavia. During his years at Batavia High School, he was on the track, basketball, and football teams, and was known as the “Flying Dutchman.” Upon high school graduation in 1940, Von Hoff joined the U.S. Navy where, in May 1942, he survived the sinking of the USS Lexington during the Battle of the Coral Sea. He retired as a Chief Petty Officer after 20 years of service and returned to Batavia in 1960 to raise his family. He served as Recreational Director of Parks, Superintendent of Parks, and the first Superintendent of the Batavia Park District. He was also a school bus driver both on a daily basis and for the athletic teams. After a lifetime of supporting Batavia sports, Von Hoff was named “Booster of the Year” in 2001 and “Fan of the Year” in 2003. An active member of Bethany Lutheran Church, he volunteered for Meals on Wheels, Hesus House, ushered, and was a Sunday school teacher for 55 years. The Loyalty Day Parade and the Bethany float, which he worked on, encompassed Von Hoff’s love for God, America, Batavia, and children. On his 80th birthday, Mayor Jeff Schielke presented Von Hoff with a proclamation honoring him as a “Batavia Treasure.” Throughout Batavia, you will see tributes honoring his name, including Von Hoff Drive, at Bethany Lutheran’s gym, on a Quarry Park bench, and at the Memorial Park tennis courts. He is also included in the books, “Historic Batavia” and “Fox Valley Veterans: A Salute to Hometown Heroism.” Von Hoff and his wife Anne raised four Batavia High School graduates: Bruce (1962), Byron (1966), Burt (1970), and Barry (1972).

**Dennis Piron (1983):** During his years as a student at Batavia High School, Dennis Piron participated in football (All-Conference), track (Conference Champion and state qualifier in 400 meters), basketball, and baseball. After high school, he attended North Central College and participated in football and track all four years. At North Central College, he was a four-year letter winner in football, and a two-time All-American and six-time national qualifier in track and field. He graduated in 1987 with a Bachelor of Science in Marketing. From 1990 to 1999, he owned and operated the Westbank Health and Fitness Center in downtown Batavia. During this time, he was also coaching football and girls and boys track and field at Batavia High School, and earning his teaching degree. In 2000, he received his Master of Arts in Teaching from National Lewis University and type 75 certificate through Aurora University. His teaching career began in the Math Department at Batavia High School, and, nearly two decades later, he is still part of this successful department. Piron is currently Batavia High School’s head football and boys track coach. Under his leadership, the Bulldogs varsity football team has qualified for the IHSA State Playoffs four years in a row, won the IHSA Class 6A title in 2013, and has yet to lose a conference game. Since coaching girls and boys track and field in 1990, his teams have produced 17 conference championships, two sectional champions, four state champions, and more than 100 state qualifiers. Piron has also made a significant impact on the Batavia Community through his development of Batavia Youth Football and Batavia Jr. Bulldog Football Summer Camp with former head BHS football coach, Mike Gaspari. Piron established the 5th-Grade Track Meet with 300 students competing at Batavia High School every year, the Les Hodge Track Meet, Coach D Invite, Coach Heimsath Invite, Coach Anderson Track Meet, the “Dog Pound” student section, youth track summer camps, speed camps, and coaching clinics. Piron is a member of the Batavia Rotary Club and past president, and currently serves on the IHSA’s Advisory

Council on Player Safety. He and his wife Joanne live in Batavia with their three children, Peyton (attends North Central College), Alexandra, and Tyler.

**Rudy Dubis (1970):** Since the day Rudy Dubis graduated high school, he has been a full-time Bulldog. Dubis began his service in 1970 when he was a senior in high school and was asked to announce at a basketball game. He has continued to announce basketball games, and also became the announcer for BHS football games. His now-famous phrase, “Home of the Battlin’ Bulldogs,” is loudly and proudly stated with vigor when welcoming everyone to games. He has announced for six different athletic directors, six head basketball coaches, and seven High School principals during his tenure as announcer. The Illinois Basketball Coaches Association inducted Dubis into its Hall of Fame in 1998 as a “Friend of Basketball,” illustrating his statewide recognition. In addition to his outstanding record of service and loyalty to Batavia High School, Dubis has actively participated in the Batavia Access Toy Committee for 16 years and was the official Santa for the City of Batavia for 10 years. He continues to play Santa on Christmas Eve, delivering toys to many houses in Batavia, and has done so for more than 40 years.

### **BPS101 Staff**

**Marilyn Horbus:** Since joining BPS101 in 1976, Marilyn Horbus has provided speech and language services to students in grades preschool - 8 and is considered the foundation of Batavia’s special education services. Her commitment to serving students and their families, along with her vast knowledge in speech and language development, has been instrumental in developing the Early Childhood Program at BPS101. Shortly after coming to BPS101, she helped develop the Early Childhood Screening process, which is still in place today. She and her fellow colleagues were also instrumental in starting classroom inclusion for the District, giving special education students the support they need while they learn alongside their general education peers. She is currently the Early Intervention Transition Coordinator for BPS101, which includes screening infants and toddlers, referring them for services as needed, and supporting families as their children with special needs transition to the District’s Early Childhood program. Her passion and caring spirit for people is demonstrated through her current work as a Fox Valley literacy volunteer, story time volunteer at the Batavia Apartments, Batavia Public Library Born to Read committee member, volunteer support at Early Childhood Center Parent Education Nights, and church volunteer. During her past 40 years of service to BPS101, Horbus has led by example during unprecedented district growth, the introduction of numerous special education rules and regulations, and greater accountability relative to student performance and parent communication. She is a pillar of this school community and embodies all of the attributes of an outstanding educator with her vision, integrity, expertise, parent involvement, and genuine concern for children. Horbus earned her bachelor’s degree in Education/Speech Correction and master’s degree in Speech Pathology from Northern Illinois University. She has two daughters, Susan and Joann, who are both Batavia High School graduates. Horbus and her husband Bob reside in Batavia.

### **BPS101 Friend**

**Laura Bernabei:** The Director of Children’s Ministry at the Congregational Church of Batavia, Laura Bernabei goes above and beyond her job description to serve the city of Batavia. Most recently, she has played a key role in two programs (Half-Day Afternoon Childcare and CHIP IN Batavia’s gently used

prom dress sale) that have helped bring joy to local students and ease the financial burden for parents. Knowing the demands of working parents, Bernabei threw her heart into the Half-Day Afternoon Childcare Program, which provides free childcare for BPS101 students in grades K-5 on half days of school. This program was founded by the Batavia Ministerial Association in alliance with BPS101. For the annual Prom Dress Program, Bernabei was instrumental in convincing the Congregational Church of Batavia to house and help coordinate CHIP IN Batavia's annual gently used prom dress sale to help local students in need. Bernabei has been an active member of the Batavia Bulldog Boosters and Music Buffs for several years and was the parent volunteer liaison for the BHS Color Guard and Winter Guard for four years. Bernabei graduated from Valparaiso University with a bachelor's degree in social work. For 12 years after college, she worked in hospitals in Indiana and Southern California as a medical social worker in pediatric, obstetrics, and neonatal units. She and her husband Chuck have lived in Batavia for the last 17 years, and their children, Katie, Nick, and Erika, all attended Batavia schools.

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#### **About the BPS Hall of Honor**

The BPS Hall of Honor was founded to promote pride in Batavia Public Schools and to honor alumni, faculty, staff, and friends who have made outstanding accomplishments in their communities and their lives since they have been associated with BPS101. These recognitions are for the purpose of honoring and perpetuating the individuals who have excelled and provided our students with examples of what to aspire to be. For more information about the BPS Hall of Honor, visit <http://bps101.net/hallofhonor>.