

RHAC

RUSH-HENRIETTA ALUMNI COUNCIL

www.rhnet.org

Alumni Council Newsletter

Rush-Henrietta Alumni Council

October 2009

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Alumni Council to Induct Three Grads into Hall of Fame

Rush-Henrietta alumni are invited to attend the homecoming football game on Saturday, Oct. 17, 2009, and welcome three new members to the district's Alumni Hall of Fame.

U.S. Army Major Michael Baka '94, John "Jack" Gaffney '51, and Jonathan Plutzik '72 will be welcomed into the Rush-Henrietta Alumni Council Hall of Fame on Saturday, Oct. 17, at the Senior High School, 1799 Lehigh Station Road.

All district graduates are invited to attend any or all of the day's events, which include the traditional homecoming parade at 12:30 p.m. The parade starts at the Ninth Grade Academy, 2000 Lehigh Station Road, and ends at the high school. The Hall of Fame inductions are at 2:30 p.m. on the football field, preceding the annual homecoming football game.

"We remain impressed with the top-notch quality of the Rush-Henrietta graduates who are nominated for Hall of Fame consideration," says Joe Bellanca, a member of the Class of 1965 who serves as president of the Rush-Henrietta Alumni Council.

"It was really easy to choose this year's inductees, based on their many qualifications and achievements," Bellanca says. "However, it wasn't so easy to pass over many other terrific candidates. The fact that we

Join in the Alumni Fun!

When: 2:30 p.m.
Saturday, Oct. 17

Where: Senior High School,
1799 Lehigh Station Road

Hall of Fame Ceremony at
2:30 p.m. (football game follows)

Honorees profiled on pages 2-3.

have so many successful graduates is a testament to Rush-Henrietta."

Next spring, the Rush-Henrietta Alumni Council will seek additional nominees for this honor. Those whose names were submitted this year will be considered again.

The Rush-Henrietta Education Foundation funds the Hall of Fame induction. The foundation underwrote expenses for past recognition of distinguished alumni, now considered hall of famers.

For more information, call the Alumni Council hotline at (585) 359-5004 or e-mail cjbellanca@rochester.rr.com.

Three Graduates Named to Hall of Fame

U.S. Army Major Michael Baka Class of 1994



Photo courtesy of U.S. Department of Defense

Friends use words such as bravery, courage, respect, service, honor, and leadership to describe U.S. Army Maj. Michael Baka (middle of photo), a member of the Rush-Henrietta Class of 1994.

Baka, an honors graduate of West Point Military Academy, is a respected commanding officer who was responsible for nearly 200 soldiers on the streets of Baghdad, Iraq. Today, he serves as the Special Assistant for Honor at The Simon Center for the Professional Military Ethic at West Point.

While serving overseas, Maj. Baka was stationed with Company C, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment based in Schweinfurt, Germany. His work as a commanding officer has been profiled in publications such as *Stars and Stripes*.

Described by friends as selfless and humble, Maj. Baka often chooses to speak about his soldiers' accomplishments, rather than his own. Despite his humility, Maj. Baka has been awarded the Bronze Star with Valor while serving his country. His sense of compassion is second to none.

"He has held the hands of his dying soldiers, demonstrating care and compassion beyond many experiences I have witnessed during my medical training," says John Gibbs, D.O., who nominated Maj. Baka for this recognition.

Maj. Baka and his wife, Cathy, have three children.

John "Jack" Gaffney Class of 1951

John "Jack" Gaffney, a member of the Rush-Henrietta Class of 1951, is a lifelong resident of the school district who worked for his alma mater for nearly 60 years.

From 1951 to 1964, Mr. Gaffney owned and operated a family dairy farm in Rush. He also worked as a substitute mail carrier for Rush and West Henrietta and part-time school bus driver for Rush-Henrietta. From 1964 to 1970, he served as the assistant director of transportation for the Rush-Henrietta Central School District, and worked as director of transportation from 1971 until his retirement in 1996. Even after retiring from that post, Mr. Gaffney still worked on a part-time basis, driving school bus from 1997 to 2009.



A committed community servant, Mr. Gaffney also served as a volunteer with the Rush Fire Department in the 1950s and 1960s, a member of the Rush Town Board from 1991 to 1995, and is a founding member of the Rush-Henrietta Alumni Council. He serves as Eucharistic minister at St. Joe's Church in Rush, and helps the Rush-Henrietta Area Food Terminal.

In 1983, Mr. Gaffney was the first person to receive the Art Shock Award, given by the New York State Transportation Association to a director who demonstrated outstanding service and dedication to student transportation. In 2005, he was inducted into the New York Association of Pupil Transportation Hall of Fame.

Mr. Gaffney is a main source of information for anyone seeking to learn more about the history of the school district. For many years, he served as a tour guide for new school staff members and Board of Education representatives, driving them around Rush and Henrietta, explaining the developing landscape he has witnessed firsthand. He and his wife, Carolyn '53, live in Rush.

U.S. Army Major, Transportation Director, and Entrepreneur/Philanthropist to be Honored

Jonathan Plutzik Class of 1972

Those who know Jonathan Plutzik, a member of the Rush-Henrietta Class of 1972, say he is an entrepreneur with a flair for philanthropy.

After a 25-year career in the financial services industry, Mr. Plutzik retired as chairman of Credit Suisse First Boston in 2003. He also served for five years as chairman of Firaxis Game, providing expertise and guidance that helped the company become one of the world's leading independent game developers. In recognition of his contributions to the company, he was awarded the Asper Award for Global Entrepreneurship by Brandeis University.



For many years, Mr. Plutzik has been a tireless contributor to numerous organizations. He and his wife, Lesley Goldwasser, created a family foundation supporting medical, educational, and other projects. Mr. Plutzik also created Zara's Center, a community center in Zimbabwe dedicated to improving the lives of orphans affected by AIDS.

A cancer survivor, Mr. Plutzik has raised significant funds to assist with cancer research. He underwrote a special Holocaust Survivor's Concert at Carnegie Hall that brought together hundreds of elderly survivors of the Holocaust for a magical night of music. In addition, in honor of his late father, he helped create the Hyam Plutzik Library for Contemporary Writing Center at the University of Rochester, and produced a documentary titled, "Hyam Plutzik: American Poet," that was screened internationally.

Mr. Plutzik and his wife, Lesley, own The Betsy Hotel, which they just opened in Miami. "It is a gorgeous new hotel that focuses on the arts, literature, and philanthropy," says his sister, Roberta Baldwin. "It's unusual in concept, but certainly an extension of what Jonathan and our family in general are all about - fostering the arts, helping people, and giving back."

Hall of Fame Members

Amy Goldstein '75

U.S. Navy Capt. Brad Conners '78

Brenda Lee '68

Cornelius Southall '85

Doug Emblidge '79

Dr. Bruce Smith, '77

Dr. John Eckhardt '60

Dr. Michael Zuber '72

Elma Bellini '72

Gary Junge '66

George Haberberger '84

Howard Ressel '80

James Comstock '71

Jane Uebelacker Talley '56

Janet Breen-Zinck '72

Joan Hoffman '66

Joanne 'Jody' Wandall Day '59

Joseph DeGeorge '70

Karen L. Hayden Davis, '73

Karl Thompson '94

Kristen Waterstram-Rich '72

Laura Sadowski '77

Linda Smith '64

Matthew Vreeland '85

Patricia Gilmore Chiverton '65

Patrick Sloan '80

Paul Callerame '70

Richard Kettell '72

Robert Thompson '58

Terry Mathews-DeSant '55

Todd Bullard '79

Wade Norwood '81



Joe Bellanca '65, RHAC President, Named Volunteer of the Year

The Rush-Henrietta Central School District has named Joe Bellanca '65 as its 2009 Volunteer of the Year.

Joe is a lifelong resident of Henrietta whose volunteer work started while his children were in elementary school, when he coached Little League baseball and RHAA softball. As his two children grew, so did Joe's volunteer contributions.

Joe is one of the original members of the Rush-Henrietta Education Foundation and is serving his second term as its president. Joe also serves as president of the Rush-Henrietta Alumni Council. Joe has been relentless in his efforts to enroll Rush-Henrietta graduates in the district's online Alumni Center. He also established and maintains a huge archive of yearbooks, newspaper articles, and memorabilia.

Joe is recognized throughout the community, often because of his volunteer work, which includes serving as a packer and driver for the Rush-Henrietta Area Food Terminal. After the award was presented, Joe thanked the school district and Board of Education for its support in encouraging him to be involved. "I don't do it for the accolades," he says. "I do it because I love it."



Joe Bellanca '65, with his wife, Connie, after receiving the Rush-Henrietta Central School District's 2009 Volunteer of the Year Award. Among his volunteer efforts, Bellanca is president of the Rush-Henrietta Alumni Council.

RHAC to Sponsor First Student Career Day at Senior High School

The Rush-Henrietta Alumni Council is sponsoring its first Student Career Day from 4 to 7 p.m. Monday, Nov. 30, at the Senior High School. We're still looking for alumni who are willing to share their insights and enthusiasm with our students. Fifteen graduates already have committed to return to their alma mater to encourage current students about the need to develop strong course foundations at the high school level, and help them understand that they must have high expectations about what they accomplish in high school to set the stage for future success. For example, the district desires our students to take four years of math, four years of science, and explore foreign languages. We know our graduates - who have been successful in the working world - can help us get these messages across. As a secondary goal, we hope those in attendance will provide insight into current jobs students might not know about or new jobs that are on the horizon. If you are interested in participating in Student Career Day, please e-mail Travis Anderson at tanderson@rhnet.org no later than Friday, Oct. 16.

Help the Rush-Henrietta Alumni Council

Members of the Rush-Henrietta Alumni Council are interested in hearing from alumni regarding ways the council can continue to reach out to district graduates. Do you have a great idea or a trunk full of school memorabilia from the district's early days? Please feel free to contact RHAC president, Joe Bellanca, at (585) 334-5147 or cjbellanca@rochester.rr.com.