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31st Annual PIAA Officials' Convention

56 officials honored at culminating banquet

MECHANICSBURG, PA – The 31st Annual PIAA Officials Convention took place August 7th and 8th, 2026 at the Hilton Harrisburg. The Officials' Convention was launched by former PIAA Executive Director Dr. Robert Lombardi in 1994. It started with only 75 officials in attendance and has grown to an average of more than 1,000 officials each year. This convention has also become the largest interscholastic sports officials' convention in the country and continues to hold its place! This is a chance for officials to gain educational knowledge, review rule changes for the upcoming sports season(s), and participate in numerous sessions of the recruitment, retainment and training of officials.

The conference also featured a few specials guests. The PIAA was honored to have Buck Showalter, former Major League Baseball (MLB) manager, be the opening night speaker. Showalter managed five different MLB teams: New York Yankees, Arizona Diamondbacks, Texas Rangers, Baltimore Orioles and New York Mets. He is a four-time Manager of the Year, 3-time American League (AL) and one-time National League (NL). He is the only manager to be awarded with four different teams in four different decades. Early on in his career, Showalter was a high school basketball official for 15 years in Florida. He spoke on experiences officiating and how he resembled his experiences in officiating with managing. After the general session, Showalter spoke with the baseball umpires.

With the Officials Convention gaining national recognition, the final general session speaker was Ray Zepeda, University Interscholastic League of Texas Director of Athletics. Zepeda brings 30-years of experience working in high school athletics to the UIL.

Other breakout rooms included Becoming a Better Official, Communication Strategies, Consistent Officiating, Diagonal System, Double First Base, Player Safety and a live Field Hockey demonstration at Central Dauphin East High School were among the near 80+ sessions.

Beverly Owens-Gaither Meritorious Service Award: Ms. Leah Ann Williams

This award is bestowed upon a registered or non-registered PIAA official who has consistently shown a devotion to PIAA, interscholastic athletics and the athletes we serve. The award winner shows constant and consistent devotion through their working relationship with PIAA in its many activities. This person will have gained this award through a distinctive period of service to PIAA.

Leah Ann Williams from PIAA District X began as a basketball official in 1999, later added football and, most recently, girls flag football to an impressive officiating career. Championship assignments have included the 2019 PIAA 3A Girls Basketball Championship, district football playoff contests, and the inaugural PIAA girls flag football season. In 2026, Williams' football crew was selected by the PIAA, NFHS, and NFL as Pennsylvania's honorary high school football crew representing the Pittsburgh Steelers.

While those accomplishments are impressive, they are surpassed by an unwavering commitment to recruiting, mentoring, and supporting fellow officials. Serving as secretary and treasurer within local officials' organizations, she has become affectionately known as the chapter's "Den Mother," organizing gatherings, celebrating fellow officials, mentoring newcomers, and creating a true sense of camaraderie among those who wear the stripes.

Recruiting new officials has become a personal mission for Williams. Whether hosting recruitment clinics, encouraging sports fans, especially young people, to become officials, mentoring first-year officials, or proudly carrying a PIAA recruitment card wherever the opportunity arises, this recipient has become one of officiating's strongest ambassadors. The familiar message, #BeARef and #IfICanDoItYouCanToo, has inspired many to answer the call to serve.



Left to right: Mark Byers, PIAA Executive Director, Leah Ann Williams and Beverly Owens-Gaither.

Mario J. Donnangelo Distinguished Service Award: Marty G. Maurer, Jr.

This service award is the highest award PIAA bestows on a registered sports official. This award is reserved for those registered sports officials whose leadership and efforts have

been of great assistance to PIAA, interscholastic athletics, and the high school athletes of Pennsylvania.

Marty Maurer from PIAA District IV has devoted countless years to officiating, serving not only as an official, but as a mentor, evaluator, assignor, and leader committed to improving the profession. A graduate of Williamsport High School and Lycoming College, he began his officiating career when the Williamsport area needed officials. After starting in basketball, Maurer expanded his service to include football and softball, building a remarkable career across three sports.



Left to right: Mark Byers, PIAA Executive Director, Marty Maurer and Frank Majikes, PIAA President.

Throughout his distinguished officiating career, he has worked numerous prestigious events, including PIAA State Championships in basketball, football, and softball, the Big 33 Football Classic, Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference Championships, and multiple NCAA playoff assignments.

Beyond Maurer's work on the court and field, his greatest impact has come through his dedication to developing others. He has served as an assignor for the Pennsylvania Heartland Athletic Conference and Mid-Penn Athletic Conference, a PIAA clinician and mentor, an evaluator of officials, and a leader within District 4 officiating organizations. Through his instruction, guidance, and commitment to excellence, he has helped prepare and inspire countless officials throughout Pennsylvania and beyond.

Chapter Secretary of the Year Award: Lt. Col. Robert Karnes

To be nominated for this award, PIAA looks for chapter secretaries who go above and beyond the ordinary duties of recording attendance and sending notices to chapter members. The Chapter Secretary of the Year must show tremendous attention to detail, keeping records with the utmost accuracy.

With meticulous attention to detail, countless reminder emails, and a dedication to keeping the chapter informed and connected, Lt. Col. Robert Karnes from PIAA District XI has helped ensure that the Schuylkill Soccer Officials Chapter operates smoothly and efficiently. His reliability, professionalism, and willingness to serve have earned the respect and appreciation of everyone with whom he works.

Service has been a defining characteristic throughout his life. Following graduation from Bloomsburg University with a degree in chemistry, he was commissioned through the Army ROTC program and went on to complete 28 years of distinguished service in the United States Army and the Pennsylvania Army National Guard. Rising to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, he held numerous leadership positions, including Battalion Commander and Command Inspector General, while earning multiple Meritorious Service Medals and numerous other military honors in recognition of his exceptional dedication to duty.



Left to right: Mark Byers, PIAA Executive Director and Lt. Col. Robert Karnes.

Karnes' commitment to leadership extends beyond military service. In 2004, he began officiating high school soccer while also coaching youth soccer, helping develop not only the skills of young athletes but also their appreciation for the game. Whether serving his

country, mentoring athletes, or supporting fellow officials, he has consistently demonstrated integrity, professionalism, and a genuine commitment to others.

His dedication has strengthened the officiating community and made a lasting impact on the Schuylkill Soccer Officials Chapter. It is fitting that the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association recognizes his outstanding service and leadership.

Chapter Recognition Award: Rick Stains, Central Penn Basketball Chapter, Vice President

This award is given annually to the officials' chapter that has the largest number of convention attendees. This year's recipient has had nearly 50-chapter members register for this year's convention and over the course of the 31 conventions the Central Penn Chapter of PIAA Basketball Officials have had 686 of their members attended. Accepting the award on behalf of the chapter was Rick L. Stains, Jr., Central Penn Basketball Chapter Vice President.



Left to right: Rick Stains, Central Penn Basketball Vice President and Mark Byers, PIAA Executive Director.

PIAA Award of Merit: Frank Majikes, PIAA President

The Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association, Inc. is proud to present the PIAA Award of Merit, an honor presented by the PIAA Board of Directors to individuals who have provided many years of devoted and exemplary service to PIAA member schools, student-athletes, and registered sports officials.

Hailing from PIAA District II, Frank Majikes is a graduate of St. Mary's High School and King's College in Wilkes-Barre. He earned a master's degree from the University of Scranton. Throughout a distinguished career in education, Majikes has served as Dean of Students and principal at Bishop Hoban High School, and, since 1998, principal of the Wilkes-Barre Area Career and Technical Center.



Left to right: Mark Byers, PIAA Executive Director and Frank Majikes, PIAA President.

Since 1966, Majikes has dedicated more than six decades to officiating football and basketball at the scholastic and collegiate levels. A respected official, he has worked numerous District and PIAA Championship contests, along with assignments through the Eastern College Athletic Conference and the NCAA.

His contributions to officiating extend far beyond the contests he has officiated. He has served as Chairperson of the PIAA District II Committee, interpreter for the Wyoming Basketball Officials Organization, President of the Collegiate Basketball Officials Association, and a member of the PIAA Board of Directors, where he served as Vice President and Chairperson of the Human Resources Committee. He has also helped to mentor, assign, and evaluate officials throughout the region.

In addition to his professional and athletic contributions, Majikes has demonstrated a strong commitment to community service through involvement with St. Mary's Parish, the Wilkes-Barre Police Civil Service Commission, the Catholic Youth Center, and the United

Way. For more than 60 years, his leadership, dedication, and commitment have positively impacted student-athletes, schools, and officials throughout Pennsylvania and beyond.

Combined with the awards listed above, the two-day convention capped off by recognizing PIAA officials for their years of service to its member schools and student-athletes in Pennsylvania. The culminating banquet on Saturday, August 8th honored 51 officials for their 30-plus year dedication to high school athletics. Since 1995, 2,495 officials have been recognized.

Below are the officials who received a gold watch for 30 years of service:

30-Year Official Awards

District 1

John W Campbell
Joseph T. Kelly, Sr
Joseph Lieberman
Scott E. Speaker

District 2

Bryan Finegan
Robert S. Jones
John D. Loomis

District 3

Galen R. Brenize
James Bruno
Keith D. DeLong
Keith E. Doleman
Harry E. Flawd, III
Joe Gabriel
Von R. Jaymes
Myron L. Lebo
Edward D. Magalski
Michael L. Pursel
Scott N. Urich
Mark C. Wagner

District 4

Roger S. Orlandi
Barry G. Pidcoe
Timothy S. Wilcox
John R. Wolfe

District 6

Michael Baum
Dorothy Malone
David R. Martin
David L. Quay, Sr.
Kevin R. Ransom

District 7

Nick Carusone
David B. Davison
Brian R. Green
Anthony C. Hladek
Dean S. Lauria
Jerry N. Lavelle
David L. Lawrence
Michael A Printz

District 9

Gary J. Ball
Dave Glass
Dr. Gary E. Malacarne

District 10

Erin K. Borowicz
John E. Gerber
Timothy F. LaVan
Joseph P. Lombardi
Nancy T. Mason

District 11

Gregory Geiger
John J. Keff
Frank J. Keglovitz
Dana N. Lewis-Eberz
Paul D. Prelovsky

District 12

Gerald Boligitz
Russell McCullough

The PIAA has over 15,000 registered sport officials across the state, but this still isn't enough. With the growing number of sports and student-athletes in Pennsylvania, there's always a need for more officials. If you or someone you know would like to become an official, visit <http://www.piaa.org/officials/become/default.aspx>.

Photo gallery by Lee Ann Blascovich: [2026 Officials Convention Honorees](#)

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