

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OTHS Announces 2026 Hall of Fame Inductees

As a result of a nomination and selection process, five individuals and one team are selected as 2026 inductees to the Ottawa Township High School (OTHS) Hall of Fame sponsored by the OTHS Educational Foundation.

The OTHS Educational Foundation established the Hall of Fame in 2006, focusing on recognition of excellence while a high school student, after leaving OTHS, or a combination of both. While honorees may or may not have attended OTHS, they are significant and accomplished contributors connected to the school district.

The latest class will be introduced between OTHS basketball games January 23, 2026, in the school's historic Kingman Gym. An induction ceremony and banquet to honor inductees is scheduled for Saturday, January 24, 2026. Banquet tickets are \$45 and may be purchased by contacting Susan MacDonald at smacdonald@ottawahigh.com or Kelly Schmitt at kschmitt@ottawahigh.com.

The inductees for 2026 are as follows:

DR. RICHARD "DICK" MARTIN – (Class of 1958) Richard "Dick" Martin was an outstanding athlete at OTHS, and was also the Senior Class President. In football he was an All-Conference quarterback and Co-Captain his senior year on the undefeated Pirate football team, and received All State Honorable Special Mention, as well as several college scholarship offers. In basketball, he was a starting forward on a Pirate team that reached the "Sweet Sixteen" of the then single class IHSA State Tournament. In tennis, he was a 4-year letter winner, the first OTHS player to qualify for the IHSA State Tournament, and the

first OTHS player to win the NCIC singles title and accepted a tennis scholarship to Indiana University. He was a member of the Indiana University tennis team for three years, then chosen as Captain his senior year, but chose instead to move on to dental school. After dental school and beginning a career as a pediatric dentist, he joined the U.S. Army and ran a dental clinic at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. After his service in the Army, he began a pediatric dental practice in Bloomington Indiana. Dr. Martin participated in more than a dozen mission trips to South America and the Caribbean to provide free dental care for children in poverty.

DR. CHARLES SHEAFF – (Class of 1966) Charles Sheaff was a four-year member of the award-winning band while at OTHS. After graduation from OTHS, he attended and graduated from the University of Illinois, then received his medical degree from Rush Medical College in Chicago. Dr. Sheaff was a general surgeon for more than 45 years prior to his retirement from private practice in Jacksonville, Illinois. He traveled to Haiti in 2010 to volunteer his services after a major earthquake struck the country. He made a second humanitarian trip to Haiti in 2012, followed by two trips to Ghana doing general surgery and teaching surgical techniques, then three trips to Guatemala doing hernia repairs and gall bladder removals for the Mayan Indians. In 2016 Dr. Sheaff and his wife Linda, a nurse practitioner, traveled to India at their own expense to help immunize children against polio. Dr. Sheaff was a founder and CEO of the Jacksonville Promise, a charitable community organization dedicated to providing college educational assistance to area high school students. The organization has supported 350 students since inception, and they currently expect to support 100 students for eight semesters at \$1,500 to \$2,100 per semester.

DR. KIM NOVAK – (Class of 1970) Kim Novak was the valedictorian of the OTHS class of 1970. She was also a member of the band, the debate team, the speech team, and Thespians. Dr. Novak DVM graduated in 1976 from the University of Illinois Veterinary Medical School. At the time there were relatively few female veterinarians in the United States. She returned to Ottawa and became a co-owner of an existing veterinary practice with Dr. Loomis. Currently her veterinary practice in Ottawa is housed in a 5400 square foot mixed animal facility, with four veterinarians, twenty-four fulltime and part-time employees. The practice does both large and small animal work. Dr. Novak has volunteered and served as a member of the OTHS District 140 Educational Foundation board and the IVCC Foundation board, and she has served as an advisor to the State of Illinois disabilities group. Dr. Novak began her professional career as one of the very few female veterinarians in the United States and is now one of more than 75,000 female veterinarians practicing nationally.

GALE LANDERS – (Class of 1971) Gale Landers was an outstanding athlete at OTHS, lettering in football, basketball, baseball, and track. He was also the Senior Class President. He attended Western Illinois University (WIU) where he was a member of the baseball team all four years and inducted into the WIU Athletic Hall of Fame as a member of the 1974 baseball team. He graduated from WIU with a bachelor's degree in business and accounting and a master's degree from WIU in athletic administration. In 1984 he co-founded Fitness Formula, Ltd, and is now the sole owner of the company which developed a Chicago area network under the trade name Fitness Formula clubs. Recognized as a national leader in the health and fitness industry he was elected to the Chicago Entrepreneurship Hall of Fame. He served as a member of the board of directors for the International Health, Racquet and Sportsclub Association (IHRSA) and served as the IHRSA Board President in 2000. The Fitness Formula Clubs employ more than 1,000 staff members. Gale has established partnerships and medical sub-tenant affiliate relationships with Chicago's leading hospitals and physical therapy providers including Rush-Presbyterian St. Lukes Medical Center, Northwestern Memorial Hospital's cardiac Rehab program, and NovaCare Physical Therapy- a subtenant located in seven of his clubs. Mr. Landers speaks frequently at fitness conventions and was featured on the covers of several trade magazines in the fitness industry. He founded the FFC Cares Foundation, is an active supporter of Augie's Quest to Cure ALS and serves as a board member of the 11-10-02 Foundation, a nonprofit providing scholarships and grants to students with financial need.

JEFF VEZAIN – (Class of 1991) Jeff Vezain received his Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Northern Illinois University (NIU) in 1996 where he also performed with the university chorus, vocal jazz group, jazz combo program, and university big band. He has performed professionally in a wide variety of artistic endeavors as a singer, songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, actor, and dancer. Over the past 20 years he has performed with numerous bands from Chicago and Los Angeles. He has appeared in national television commercials, print ads, and lent his voice to radio spots. A drummer as well as a guitarist, Jeff was a finalist in his audition for the part of "Blue Man" in the hit theatrical show "Blue Man Group." Since 2005 Vezain served as lead vocalist of the Lt. Dan Band, one of the nation's most recognized military-support performance groups. The band was originally formed by Kimo Williams and Gary Sinise and was named after the character Sinise played in the Oscar award-winning film Forrest Gump. Mr. Vezain has participated in the band as lead singer in over 500 shows performed in over a dozen countries, on more than 150 military bases, the United States Capitol, and the Grand Ole Opry. The Lt. Dan Band is one of the nation's most recognized military-support performance groups and was heavily involved in the building of the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial in 2014.

2012-13 VARSITY FOOTBALL TEAM – The 2012-13 OTHS Varsity football team compiled an 11-1 record which ties for the most wins in a season in the history of the OTHS Pirate football program. They had a 9-0 regular season record and won the Northern Illinois Big 12 West title with a 5-0 record. They won the first game of the IHSA Class 6A playoffs against Normal Community and won the second round against Rock Island to advance to the Class 6A quarterfinals. They suffered their first defeat to Crete-Monee, the eventual Class 6A State Champion. The Pirates scored 322 points in the regular season while yielding 103 points to their opponents. The Pirates were led by all-state halfback Michael Hemosillo who was the Big 12 West conference Offensive MVP. Cyrano Rayfield was the conference Defensive MVP. Joining Hemosillo and Rayfield as All-Conference selections were Tyler Skolek, Austin Burant, Luke Lambert, Bobby McNutt, Nick Neurohr, Christian Price, J.S. Bryant, Will Hoffman, and Diego Martinez.