



CAS-CIAC TO INDUCT SEVEN INTO 2026 HALL OF HONOR

CHESHIRE, Conn - In recognition of exceptional careers of service to CAS-CIAC, seven distinguished honorees will be celebrated as the ninth class in the CAS-CIAC Hall of Honor. The 2025-2026 induction ceremony will be held on Wednesday, April 22, at the TPC River Highlands in Cromwell.

The CAS-CIAC Hall of Honor was established to honor individuals who have made significant long-term contributions to CAS-CIAC. Tickets to the induction dinner are available to the public and can be purchased through the link below. Please contact the CIAC for additional event information or for more bio information on the honorees.



Anthony "Butch" Azzara has been associated with the CIAC since his days attending Waterbury's Sacred Heart High School. In 1967 he was a member of Sacred Heart's Class L Boys Basketball State Championship team. In 1974 he began a career in Waterbury education in which he'd coach, teach (math), and lead – as a principal and assistant principal. From 1986 to 1999 Butch officiated CIAC girls basketball games. Beginning in the 2000s, he served on multiple CIAC committees including as chair of the CIAC Boys Basketball Committee, as chair of the CIAC Baseball Committee, and as chair of the CIAC Board of Control from 2017 to 2021. In 2013, Azzara was awarded a CAS Citation, the Association's highest honor.



Dennis Carrithers began his career in education in West Hartford, working as an English teacher and assistant principal at Conard High School. He spent 15 years as the principal at Simsbury High School where he gained a reputation as a strong advocate for students - a caring and dedicated leader. In 1999 he was named the CAS High School Principal of the Year. His work with CAS-CIAC began in 1980, including as chair of the Eligibility Committee and secretary of the CIAC Board of Control. In 2001 he was awarded a prestigious CAS Citation. Upon retiring from Simsbury in 2002, Dennis joined the CAS staff. In 2004 he was appointed to the position of Assistant Executive Director of High School Programs, retiring from CAS-CIAC in 2012.

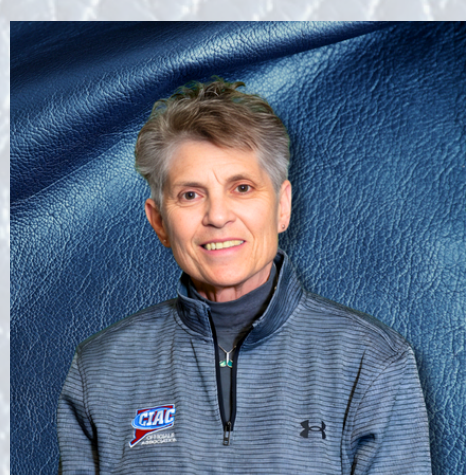
(Dennis Carrithers is unable to attend the Induction Ceremony.)

Robert Hale's exceptional 38-year career in education began as a music teacher and band director. He later moved to administration, serving as an assistant principal at The Morgan School in Clinton, and then as the 20-year principal at Westbrook High School. As a school leader, he took a near-immediate interest in contributing at the statewide level through CAS-CIAC. His work on varied committees – from the Principals' Technology Committee, to the Arts Committee, to the Field Hockey Committee - earned him a prestigious CAS Citation in 2004. Following his retirement from Westbrook, Bob enthusiastically joined the staff of the CIAC/Special Olympics Unified Sports program, serving as its director from 2019 to 2025.



George Hall was the proud 23-year athletic director at Berlin High School, adding 14 varsity sports during his tenure. In 1998 he was selected as the CIAC High School Athletic Director of the Year. Before his AD role, George was a dedicated social studies teacher, and coach at BHS - coaching four different sports for the Redcoats. He served on various CAS-CIAC committees from 1985 to 2001 and joined the central office staff in 2001. Hall is the first athletic director ever hired by the CIAC to serve as assistant executive director with a focus on tournament development and Unified Sports. He would leave his mark as the 20-year Tournament Director for CIAC Ice Hockey.

Name a committee at CAS-CIAC and there's a good chance **Dr. Beth A. Smith** has served on it! Highlights include being the Chair for CAS' High School Board of Control, Chair of the Assistant Principals' Committee, and CIAC Board of Control Treasurer. Beth's signature high-energy leadership style was matched by the high expectations she set for students and staff. She began her career as a special education teacher at Shelton High School and was named Teacher of the Year in 1999. After taking on leadership roles at Wethersfield High School and Newington High School, she returned to Shelton High School as Headmaster, a position she held for 11 years. Dr. Smith was awarded a prestigious CAS Citation in 2017. Following a 35-year career in public education, she remains active on the CIAC Softball Committee and continues to serve as Michaels Cup Committee Chair and CAS Executive Coach.



A retired Norwalk High School physical science teacher and field hockey coach, **Donna Vavrinec** has over 50 years of accumulated experience officiating basketball, field hockey and softball. She officiated CIAC basketball state tournament games from 1981 to 1990 before becoming a Div. I, II, and III collegiate basketball official for seven years. She may be most distinguished as a CIAC and NCAA softball umpire (multiple NCAA championships worked), earning a reputation as one of the premier fast pitch officials in the nation. Donna served eight years as the NCAA's Softball National Coordinator. She is currently the Chair of the Connecticut Field Hockey Board of Officials and has served as a CIAC inductee into the Connecticut Scholastic and Collegiate Softball Hall of Fame, and a 2005 inductee into the Connecticut Women's Basketball Hall of Fame.

Dr. Leroy C Williams' career in education and high school athletics, which spans nearly half a century, has made him a trusted mentor and ally to student-athletes in Greater New Haven and statewide across Connecticut. That service includes a position on the CIAC Football Committee since 1986, serving as chair of the Committee from 1998 through the 2024-2025 school year. During his term as chairperson, Dr. Williams oversaw many important changes in Connecticut high school football which included concussion safety protocols, reduction in full contact among high school athletes, and the creation of six divisions. He also had a term as the Region I representative on the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Football Rules Committee. The CIAC dedicated its 2025 CIAC Football State Tournament in his honor. An Honorable Mention All-East football player at UConn, Leroy would return to his hometown of New Haven to coach and teach (special education), rising to the level of principal.

