



AKRON CENTRAL SCHOOLS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

COACH STONE HONORED WITH SECTION VI SPORTSMANSHIP AWARD

AKRON, NEW YORK (September 2, 2016) – Akron coach Marlene Stone was awarded the Section VI Coaches Sportsmanship Award during the Section's 17th Annual Recognition Dinner held Wednesday, August 31, 2016 at The Columns Banquet facility in Elma, New York. The event honored just eighteen coaches from all sports of the ninety-five schools participating in Section VI Athletics with the award.

The event was attended by the who's who of high school sports in the region including the Section VI Executive Committee led by President Mr. Al Gens of Dunkirk High School and Executive Director, Mr. Timm Slade. The chairmen for the Coaches Sportsmanship Awards are Mr. Doug Ames of the Niagara-Orleans League and Mr. Jim Graczyk of the Section VI Executive Committee.

Following a social hour and buffet dinner, introductions were made and Section VI Service Awards were presented by Mr. Slade. Introductions and presentations to each of the Coaches Sportsmanship Award recipients ensued. Sharon Catalano of Akron Schools made the presentation to Coach Stone in the absence of Akron Athletic Director, Mr. Stephen Dimitroff.

Stone has been coaching athletes at Akron Schools for over eleven years at the modified, junior varsity and varsity levels. She was named head coach of Akron's varsity softball program in 2005 and has developed the program into one of the finest in Section VI with five appearances in the Class B Semi-Finals, the Niagara-Orleans Co-Championship in 2014 and first place in the Niagara-Orleans league this past 2016 season with a 19-3 overall record.

This spring, Stone and two of her teams, Akron Varsity Softball and Amherst Lightning, in collaboration with Hilbert College Rotaract Club, launched the Just DoNate It campaign to collect used softball equipment to be shipped to Buffalo's sister city, Bani, of the Dominican Republic, to build a girls softball league. So far, the team has collected over 2200 balls, 700 bats, 150 pairs of cleats, 380 batting helmets, 250 equipment bags, 35 buckets, 250 uniforms and 300 gloves, plus other equipment. Total number of pounds has not yet been determined, but all that is collected will be loaded on an Air Force cargo plane through the Denton Program at the Niagara Falls Air Force Base and sent to Fundo Crème, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to community development in Bani. Come January, Coach Stone and some of her team members will travel to the Dominican Republic to get the league organized.

Stone and the teams are grateful to those who made equipment donations, in addition to Doyle Security which provided color copies of handouts and posters, Jamestown Container for the supply of shipping boxes, Perry's Ice Cream for providing warehouse space until they're ready to pack the plane, and administration at Akron Schools.

Media coverage for the campaign was successful and included a pre-dawn practice for the Akron team with Channel 7's Matt Bove for the morning show. Team members and Coach Stone were interviewed by the sportscaster about the collection and their motivation to build a softball league in Bani, Dominican Republic.

Over the years, Coach Stone has encouraged all of her players to participate in community service activities that have included bake sales or car washes to raise money for "Play for the Cure" or "Tanya's Trot for Epilepsy Awareness," volunteering to serve breakfast or spaghetti dinners at one of Akron's Rotary Club fundraisers or getting out rakes and shovels and putting on garden gloves for the annual fall and spring clean-ups on the grounds of Akron's Knight-Sutton Museum for over ten years.

"I don't know if I have been around anyone more competitive and at the same time as compassionate as Coach Stone," expressed Mr. Dimitroff, administrator at Akron Schools. "Marlene has a way of balancing high expectations with the need to show empathy at just the right time. This innate character trait has proven to maximize each player's ability to perform in every sport she has coached and more importantly, to value each other as members of a family outside the lines."

He also added, "Most coaches would say at one time or another, 'If I can clone this particular player, we would be champions every year.' As an athletic director, the same could be said for Marlene as a coach!"

The Akron varsity softball team under Coach Stone's leadership have received the Art Wojak Memorial Sportsmanship award in 2015 and earned the sportsmanship award at the annual Mudville Softball Tournament in Herkimer, NY in 2016. Marlene was also selected Coach of the Year for the Niagara Orleans League.

For more information about the athletic program at Akron Schools and a photo gallery showing the progress made by Coach Stone and her teams with the Just DoNate It campaign, please go to akronschools.org/softball.

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Mr. Al Gens, President Section VI Athletic Council, Coach Marlene Stone, Sharon Catalano, presenter