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## Wheeling Hall of Fame Board Announces 2019 Inductees

**WHEELING, W.Va., April 10, 2019** — Wheeling Hall of Fame Board Chairman Robert DeFrancis announced the names of inductees to be honored in 2019. The announcement was made at a press conference Wednesday in Wheeling City Council Chambers.

“We are pleased to announce this year’s honorees and to share with the public the date of the induction ceremony, which is Friday, June 7. Please join us that evening for dinner and to learn more about the significant contributions these Wheeling citizens have made to the local area and beyond,” said DeFrancis.

The dinner will be held at 6 p.m., at WesBanco Arena. Tickets are available online at [wesbancoarena.com](http://wesbancoarena.com), by calling 304-233-4470 or at the arena box office located at 2- 14<sup>th</sup> Street. Box office hours are 9 a.m., Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday.

The Wheeling Hall of Fame was created in 1977 and is on display inside WesBanco Arena.

Hall of Fame Honorees are classified into the following six categories:

- Music and Fine Arts
- Business, Industry and Professions
- Education and Religion
- Sports and Athletics
- Public Service
- Philanthropy

### **Inductees for 2019 include:**

#### **William Burrus, 1936–2018 (Business, Industry and Professions)**

A graduate of Lincoln High School and U.S. Army veteran, Burrus built on Wheeling’s rich labor history when, in 2001, he became the first African American president of the American Postal Workers Union and, in doing so, became the first African American to be elected by membership as president of a national union. Playing a prominent role in labor union matters for more than a half century, he likewise held executive roles in the Union Network International, the Black Labor Union, and the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations. He was twice named among the 100 most influential Black Americans in Ebony magazine.

**Sue Seibert Farnsworth, (Public Service)**

This dedicated community servant trained as a lawyer at West Virginia University. Her public service includes the Wheeling Park Commission, Oglebay Foundation, Wheeling Symphony Board, Women's Giving Circle and Community Foundation for the Ohio Valley. An education advocate, Farnsworth served on and chaired the WVU Board of Advisors, its Foundation Board and the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools and is an emeritus trustee of The Linsly School. She received WVU's Most Loyal Mountaineer Award, its highest honor, the Order of Vandalia Distinguished Service Award, and the College of Law's Justitia Officium Award for outstanding service and contribution to the legal profession.

**Harriette Shull "Hydie" Friend (Public Service)**

Friend led early efforts to use historic preservation for economic development; secured funding and oversaw renovation of Centre Market; and developed bike trails, the Veterans Memorial Amphitheater and the Waterfront Wednesday's concert series. At Wheeling Heritage, she spearheaded the purchase and renovation of the Capitol Theatre, construction of Heritage Port, and creation and installation of interpretive exhibits and signage. She was instrumental in obtaining tax credits for rehabilitation of historic structures and preparing National Register of Historic Places nominations. She is a daughter of Sherman C. Shull and Harriette Hitchman, stepdaughter of Brooks E. Wigginton, and wife of Judge L. Edward Friend II.

**Dr. Donald W. Mercer (Business, Industry and Professions)**

A Warwood native, Mercer earned a chemistry degree at then Wheeling College and master and doctorate degrees in biochemistry at the University of Pittsburgh. He joined Pittsburgh's Montefiore Hospital in 1968 where he researched and developed a blood test for the rapid and reliable detection of suspected heart attacks. Previous tests (EKG and blood enzymes) were thought unreliable whereas his CK-MB blood test showed nearly 100 percent accuracy. Mercer's test, patented in 1977 and commercially produced shortly thereafter, received many professional accolades and became the most widely used diagnostic test for heart attacks worldwide. It is considered one of the major medical developments of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

**Everett Lee (Music and Fine Arts)**

This violinist and conductor was the first African American to conduct a major Broadway production, the first African American to conduct a major symphony orchestra in the South and the first African American to conduct a major opera company in the United States. He founded the Cosmopolitan Symphony and was the conductor of the Münchener Opernbühne, the Bogotá Symphony Orchestra, the Bogotá Philharmonic, the Symphony of the New World and the Norrköping Symphony Orchestra. Lee conducted more than 1,000 orchestral, choral and operatic works during his career. The City of Wheeling proclaimed Aug. 31, 2017, Lee's 101st birthday, as "Everett Lee Day." Lee later resided in Sweden.

### **Sister Joanne Gonter (Education and Religion)**

Sister Joanne Gonter, V.H.M., was born in Wheeling and graduated from Mount de Chantal Visitation Academy (1952). She earned a bachelor of science degree from Wheeling College, now Wheeling Jesuit University (1959), and a master of science degree from Marshall University (1968). She taught at Mount de Chantal for 49 years, served as superior of the community and as director of alumnae relations. With wisdom and grace, she oversaw the closing of Mount de Chantal (2008). Named a West Virginia History Hero (2006), she received three awards from Wheeling Jesuit University: Distinguished Alumna (1998), Rev. Clifford Lewis, SJ, Award (1995), and the Ignatian Medal (2016).

### **John Joseph "J.J." Owens 1887-1931 (Music and Fine Arts)**

Prominent artist J.J. Owens graduated from the Maryland Institute College of Art and further studied in Paris. During his lifetime, he was commissioned to paint portraits of dignitaries from Wheeling, Washington, D.C. and beyond. Many of his paintings of Wheeling's landmarks and buildings are on permanent display at the Ohio County Public Library. He served as an illustrator in the U.S. Army during WWI and maintained a Wheeling studio, taught art and founded the Art Club of Wheeling, which supported public art. He gained nationwide attention after representation in exhibits in New York and other major cities. His death at 44 cut short his career.

### **Ronald G. Peyton (Sports and Athletics)**

Few in the profession of physical therapy and sports medicine can match the accomplishments of Peyton. The graduate of Triadelphia High School earned the highest award given a physical therapist, the Catherine Worthingham Fellowship Award, in 2011. He was inducted by his alma mater into the West Virginia University College of Physical Activity and Sports Sciences Hall of Fame in 1997. He served as director of sports medicine services at the Olympic Village for the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia. After receiving master and doctorate degrees from Duke University, Peyton was president and chief executive officer of The Dogwood Institute in Alpharetta, Georgia, from 1970-2010.

### **Albert F. Schenk III, 1916–1995 and Kathleen Hogan Schenk, 1921–2009 (Philanthropy)**

These unparalleled philanthropists were born in Wheeling. Albert was a nephew of Hall of Fame member Otto Schenk and continued the Schenk family tradition of giving generously to scores of Wheeling-based charities. During their lifetimes, major contributions were made to Oglebay Park for Schenk Lake and to Mount de Chantal Visitation Academy, Wheeling Jesuit University and Wheeling Hospital. The Schenk Charitable Trust was created upon Albert's death and enlarged following Kathleen's death in 2009. The trust distributes hundreds of thousands of dollars annually for scholarships, capital improvements and program assistance to educational and social service agencies throughout the Wheeling area.

**Rev. Willie F. Stinson, 1936-2018 (Education and Religion)**

During his years as a Wheeling pastor, Stinson was an example to follow, an inspiration to all who knew him, a leader among people of faith, and a force for hope and progress in East Wheeling and beyond. A founder of Agape Baptist Church, he worked for 26 years at the task of winning friends and influencing people from all walks of life to participate in building a city more in harmony with the values of God's Kingdom. Before entering the ministry, he studied to become a chef, a position he held in the U.S. Army as well as for the Waldorf Astoria Hotels and Resorts.

**Susan D. Vail (Sports and Athletics)**

A natural athlete from an early age, Vail won the West Virginia Women's Amateur Championship eight times and won the West Virginia Senior Amateur seven times, for a total of 15 individual women's golf championships. She represented the Women's West Virginia Golf Association 18 times in the prestigious Virginias-Carolinas Team Matches where she was elected team captain of the Virginias team. Vail started the women's golf team at Wheeling Jesuit University and as head coach, her teams have won six conference championships. In 2016, she was elected to the National Collegiate Athletic Association Division II Women's Golf Committee, serving as director of the regional Women's National Collegiate Championship.

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**The Wheeling Hall of Fame Board Members are:** Robert DeFrancis – Chairman, Jeanne Finstein - Vice Chair, Philip Stahl – Secretary-Treasurer, F. Wayne Barte, Dick Coury, Rev. Darrell W. Cummings, Ben Exley IV, George Frazier, Jay Frey; Jon-Erik Gilot, Doug Huff, David Javersak, Charles J. Kaiser, Kim McCluskey, Wendy Scatterday - Council Representative, Dianna Vargo, Chris Villamagna, Rev. Robert Willits and Maureen Zambito.

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