



Press Release

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For Immediate Release
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Pennsbury High School Inducts Inaugural Hall of Fame Class

(Fallsington, PA) – The Pennsbury School District welcomed five alums back to the district for its first-ever Hall of Fame induction ceremony on Thursday, October 13. An evening reception was held at Makefield Highlands Golf Club to celebrate the honorees alongside family, friends, and Pennsbury staff.

The junior and senior classes packed into the auditorium at Pennsbury High School East to hear from Robert Costa (Class of 2004,) Hallie Jackson (Class of 2002,) Richard Kind (Class of 1974,) Mark Shelhamer (Class of 1977,) and Troy Vincent (Class of 1988.) The rest of the student body watched the ceremony via live-stream from their classrooms.

Student ambassadors Amanda Qu, Will Livingston, Gabby Bamberski, Chris Vergantino, Addison Blumberg, Jason Kind, Lorelei Graffius, Ahtesham Alvi, Lily Erodogan, and Gavin Kuebler were assigned to escort the inductees during their visit and introduce them during the ceremony. Each honoree took to the stage and spoke about their time at Pennsbury, reflecting on their teachers and community and sharing messages of encouragement and inspiration.

"I am a true product of the Pennsbury School District," said Troy Vincent, Executive Vice President of Football Operations at the NFL and former NFL player.

"I am a product of the values of the people that saw something in me that I didn't see in myself," Vincent continued.

The former Philadelphia Eagle credits former Pennsbury Falcons Football coach Jim Dundala with changing his life. Vincent said Mr. Dundala suggested he try out for the football team despite Vincent's objections that he didn't play football.

"Coach Dundala encouraged me to try out and said he felt I could help the team. Being a Falcon helped shape my life. It allowed me to be a leader, a father, and a grandfather."

"Pennsbury is a special community. You don't necessarily see that when you are 16, 17, or 18. You will pull from the things you learn here throughout your life. It's a special time, a special moment. Embrace it."

Vincent said he had a 2.44-grade point average and didn't know how he would make it, but he did. "Thanks to the dedication of my teachers. I wouldn't be here today if it weren't for those individuals."

Robert Costa, Chief Election & Campaign Correspondent for CBS News, was also among the inductees. His connection to Pennsbury remains solid, and he frequently returns to give back to the students and community that helped shape him.

"This group is a representation of what you can do if you go to Pennsbury High School," offered Costa.

Costa encouraged the students to take advantage of as many opportunities as possible at PHS.

"So many people at Pennsbury would say to me "yes." And that's why I think Pennsbury is different. When I went to Notre Dame, which is a great college, I really recognized the power of a Pennsbury education. I was surprised to see how many people didn't seem ready for college. They didn't seem socially with it. They didn't seem to have the kind of sixth sense you get here at Pennsbury."

"When I think about what's the secret to the success I've had, what makes me different than other journalists - I know in my gut it's because I went to Pennsbury. If you go to a big public high school, you get to have experiences with people from all different walks of life. This is a place that teaches you and tests you to become an adult. It doesn't shelter you, but it has a warm embrace at the same time. There is something special about a place that doesn't coddle you but gives you every opportunity to be a leader."

"If I learned any lesson at Pennsbury, it's that if you have a dream, if you have an idea, you can achieve it. We are no different than any of you. There is nothing special about me personally. What's special is the experience I had."

Hallie Jackson, Senior Washington Correspondent for NBC News, was unable to attend the ceremony due to work obligations, but she recorded a video for the students about her experience at Pennsbury.

"I had some really big fails in high school. I learned in hindsight that it was fine to be weird. High school felt kind of miserable to me sometimes, but I think that's just how high school is sometimes."

"I'm a Pennsbury person to the core," continued Jackson. "I know Pennsbury. I appreciate Pennsbury, and I also know that what you do and who you are in high school doesn't have to define you. If it does and you're thriving, that's awesome! Keep doing it. But if you're having a hard time, that's totally okay too. I did. I wish I knew some of the stuff that you probably know now. It's okay to ask for help; if you haven't found your people, you will; it is actually not embarrassing to be a straight-A student; being kind of a nerd is actually kind of cool. Take the weird path, do the weird thing, be the weird friend. It'll work out. You're going to be better for it and for having that experience here."

Actor Richard Kind marveled about his time at Pennsbury and encouraged students to take the time to get to know their teachers and the community around them.

"Live life to the fullest. It's a wonderful place to be. I am who I am because of Pennsbury High School. I had a great education, and an education doesn't just come from books. There are almost 3,000 people here in one community. How many of them are different than you? Get to know them. See what the world is like because it's full of fascinating people and, if you're lucky, fascinating experiences."

Kind echoed Costa's sentiments about immersing oneself in all Pennsbury High School has to offer.

"Get to know people, get to know life, get to know the world. Get involved in activities and clubs. Go! It's better than your phone. I think," Kind joked.

NASA scientist Mark Shelhamer was focused on math and science when he attended Pennsbury, but he was also heavily involved in music. After graduation, he earned a bachelor's and master's degree in electrical engineering and a doctorate in biomedical engineering. He reflected that overall, he spent 24 years in school and had many different teachers, but one, in particular, impacted him.

"I've seen a lot of professors, and there is one that still shows up in my dreams, Gene Polaski," said Shelhamer. Mr. Polaski was the head of the music program when Shelhamer attended Pennsbury High School. He was known for expecting a lot from his students.

"We learned what it was like to be truly good at something. We won every jazz band competition. Getting to know what it's like to be truly good at something is truly powerful."

Shelhammer credits Pennsbury for preparing him academically for college but said his band experience helped shape him.

"That feeling of knowing that you're good at something and that nagging feeling you know when you didn't do as good as you could have. Those stay with you and help you no matter what field you are in."

The Pennsbury High School Hall of Fame was created to honor those graduates who have demonstrated excellence in their chosen careers. The Pennsbury High School Hall of Fame wall, located in the main office lobby at Pennsbury High School West, has been constructed to honor the inductees. Wooden plaques with black brass plates adorn the wall identifying each inductee, their year of graduation, and accomplishments. Each year a new plaque will be added to recognize five additional Pennsbury High School graduates. Inductees must have graduated at least ten years ago to be considered for this honor.

About the Inductees:

Robert Costa, Class of 2004

Robert Costa is the Chief Election & Campaign Correspondent for CBS News, where he covers national politics and American democracy. Based in Washington D.C., he is a regular on "CBS Evening News with Norah O'Donnell," "CBS Mornings," and CBS's popular weekend program, "Sunday Morning," where he has interviewed high-profile personalities ranging from Congresswoman Liz Cheney to rapper Killer Mike.

Before joining CBS News in 2022, Costa and legendary journalist Bob Woodward co-wrote "Peril," which was published by Simon & Schuster. The book documented the tumultuous transition between the Trump presidency and the Biden presidency and was a #1 New York Times bestseller. It was also cited in numerous subpoenas issued by the House committee investigating the January 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. Prior to working with Woodward, Costa served as the moderator and managing editor of "Washington Week" on PBS from 2017 to

2020. The primetime weekly news program, which features in-depth discussions with top reporters, is one of the longest-running shows on television.

From 2014 to 2021, Costa was a national political reporter at The Washington Post, where he worked with colleagues on numerous investigations and covered Congress, the White House, and national campaigns. He also served as a lead host of "Post Live," the Post's live interview series featuring newsmakers such as Senator Bernie Sanders, Vice President Mike Pence, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and actress Jane Fonda. From 2015 to 2020, Costa was also a political analyst for NBC News and MSNBC, appearing on "Morning Joe," "Meet the Press," and "The 11th Hour," among many other programs.

Costa holds a bachelor's degree, with honors, from the University of Notre Dame, where he is a former trustee and a master's degree in politics from the University of Cambridge.

While at Pennsbury, he was an active member of the speech and debate team, the student television station PHS-TV and served in student government. He also worked to book musical acts for Pennsbury's world-famous prom and landed performances by Maroon 5, Eve 6, and John Mayer.

Hallie Jackson, Class of 2002

Hallie Jackson is the senior Washington correspondent for NBC News, covering the biggest stories from our nation's capital, and hosts the 3:00 p.m. hour of "MSNBC Reports" as well as "Hallie Jackson NOW" at 5:00 p.m. on NBC News NOW. Jackson is also a fill-in anchor for "NBC Nightly News" and "Today." Jackson's work is featured across all NBC News and MSNBC platforms and NBCNews.com.

In February 2020, Jackson co-moderated the NBC News and MSNBC Democratic presidential debate in Las Vegas, Nevada, the most watched Democratic presidential debate in history, with nearly 20 million viewers. Previously, Jackson was the Chief White House Correspondent for NBC News, covering President Donald Trump's administration from the inauguration through the impeachment trial and the 2020 election. Jackson traveled with the president for every key international trip, including the summits with Kim Jong Un and the anniversary of D-Day in Normandy.

In 2021, Jackson became the host of the 3:00 p.m. hour on MSNBC, where she brings well-sourced updates and breaks down key developments from Washington. She previously hosted the 10:00 a.m. hour on MSNBC since 2017.

While reporting on the 2016 campaign trail, Jackson consistently broke developments in the election cycle and scored exclusive interviews with several GOP candidates, including Donald Trump, Senator Ted Cruz, Senator Marco Rubio, and Ben Carson.

Before covering politics for the network, Jackson reported from the Los Angeles bureau of NBC News for a year.

Prior to joining the network in 2014, Jackson was a national correspondent for Hearst Television in Washington, D.C., providing daily coverage of political and national events for its 26 affiliates across the country. She has also worked for WFSB-TV in Hartford, Connecticut, and was a general assignment reporter for WBOC-TV in Salisbury, Maryland.

Jackson, a native of Yardley, Pennsylvania, graduated from Johns Hopkins University with a bachelor's degree in political science.

Richard Kind, Class of 1974

Richard Kind was born on November 22, 1956, in Trenton, New Jersey. He was later raised in Bucks County, where he graduated from Pennsbury High School in 1974. He went on to attend Northwestern University as a pre-law major before a friend of his father's persuaded him to give acting a try. In 1983, he joined Second City Mainstage after being a member of the Practical Theater Company, an improv comedy group founded by Julia Louis-Dreyfus and Brad Hall, among others. Kind performed in several resident stage productions.

Kind is best known for his work on sitcoms. In 1992, he was cast in the recurring role of Dr. Mark Devanow on *Mad About You*. His character appeared less frequently in later seasons because Kind was also playing the role of Paul Lassiter on *Spin City*. In addition to starring in the Amazon Prime Video original series *Red Oaks*, and HBO's *Luck*, he has had guest spots on numerous television shows, including *Two and a Half Men*, and *The Goldbergs*, and recurring roles on *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and *Gotham*. Movie credits include *The Producers*, *A Serious Man*, *The Station Agent*, and 2013's Oscar winner for Best Picture, *Argo*. Kind's voice is equally as recognizable as his expressive face. He has lent his voice to several animated films: Bing Bong in *Inside Out*, Molt in *A Bug's Life*, and Van in *Cars* and *Cars 2*. You can also hear him on episodes of the animated television series *Dora, the Explorer*, *The Penguins of Madagascar*, and *American Dad*.

Richard Kind was nominated for a Tony award for Best Featured Actor in a Play for his performance as Marcus Hoff in the 2013 Broadway production of *The Big Knife*. George Clooney is a close personal friend of Mr. Kind's and was the best man at Mr. Kind's wedding.

Mr. Kind has three children and currently resides in the Upper West Side of Manhattan in New York City.

Mark Shelhamer, Class of 1977

Mark Shelhamer was born in Trenton, New Jersey and raised in Fairless Hills, Pennsylvania. Mark attended the Pennsbury School District, graduating from Pennsbury High School in 1977. While at Pennsbury High School, he concentrated on math and science, but also played drums in the concert, marching, and jazz bands. He attended Drexel University where he earned both a bachelor's and master's degree in electrical engineering, while doing biomedical research at Temple University's medical school.

After finishing his master's degree at Drexel, he attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for biomedical engineering and earned his Doctorate in 1990. It was at MIT that he was introduced to the fascinating world of human spaceflight, and performed research on the astronaut crews of two space shuttle missions. He also had his first taste of weightlessness in the NASA parabolic flight aircraft known as the Vomit Comet, which provide short periods of zero-G for research. This started an addiction to being weightless that remains to this day. It was at MIT that he also met his wife Jennifer Wiseman, now the chief scientist for the Hubble Space Telescope.

Mark went on to Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore to further his research, and remain there 32 years later, where he is a professor in the school of medicine. He runs the Human Spaceflight Lab and a larger initiative known as the Bioastronautics at Hopkins. In 2013, he took leave from Johns Hopkins to serve as Chief Scientist of the NASA Human Research Program, where he coordinated the entire NASA research effort to maintain human health and performance for missions to the moon and Mars. Since then, he continues to do reasearch, consults for NASA, the FAA, and the Commerical Spaceflight Federation, and is an adjunct faculty member at George Washington University.

Mark is best known for his pioneering work on a multidisciplinary approach to human spaceflight, including the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo programs. He is a leading authority on the human response to spaceflight, and writes and speaks widely on that topic. He has over 100 scientific publications, and has published the book Nonlineaer Dynamics in Physiology: A State-Space Approach. He has two patents for various vestibular assessment devices.

Troy Vincent, Class of 1998

Troy Vincent, Sr., is currently the Executive Vice president of Football Operations at the National Football League (NFL). In this role, Vincent is responsible for several divisions, including Business Strategy and Development, Officiating, Game Operations, Policy and Compliance, Football Communications and Marketing, Player Community, and Player Engagement.

As a non-voting member of the Competition Committee, Vincent develops programs for players, coaches, and football executives. The NFL Legends Community, NFL Way to Play, and The Rookie Success program are just a few key initiatives created under his watch. In addition, he has implemented programs that focus on wellness/mental health, suicide prevention, stigma change, and domestic violence & sexual assault prevention. He works closely with clubs, players, and legends on social justice initiatives in communities across the nation.

Troy Vincent began his 15-year professional football career as a first-round draft pick and continues to be recognized for his contributions on the field. He made five Pro Bowl appearances and was selected All-Pro three times. He has been nominated to the NFL Pro Football Hall of Fame and has been inducted into the Hall of Fames for the Philadelphia Eagles, the State of Pennsylvania, the University of Wisconsin, Pennsbury High School, and recently the Philadelphia Sports Hall of Fame.

Before joining the league's front office, Vincent was the President of the NFL Players Association, serving from 2004-2008. Prior to that, he served as a player representative for eight years. During his tenure with the NFL Players Association, Vincent was instrumental in negotiating, constructing, and implementing three Collective Bargaining Agreement extensions. Personally, Vincent is an advocate against domestic violence and sexual assault. Being directly affected by domestic violence, both Vincent and his wife, Tommi, share a passion and commitment to promoting the message of "Leadership Over Violence". They serve their community by visiting shelters, speaking to advocacy groups, and encouraging others to act to end domestic violence and sexual assault.

Additionally, through their foundation, Love Thy Neighbor, the Vincent family is dedicated to humanitarian efforts defined by giving back to those in need throughout communities across America, beginning with their hometown of Trenton, NJ. Because of his charitable endeavors, Vincent is the only player in history to have received the NFL Walter Payton Man of the Year award and the NFL Players Association Byron Whizzer White Award. He also received the National Jefferson Award for Public Service for extraordinary public service. Vincent also serves on the President's Council on Sports, Fitness, and Nutrition. A father of five, Vincent and his wife call Virginia home.

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