

# 2013 Hall of Fame Inductee Biographies



## JOHN WILLIAM RHODES

John "Bill" Rhodes began his professional career as Sports Supervisor in Lansing. He was Director of Parks and Recreation in South Haven and then East Grand Rapids, where he served for 29 years.

Bill is remembered for his passion in developing and creating a 'sense of community.' He played an integral part in the formation of the Joint Facilities Committee comprised of the East Grand Rapids City Manager, Superintendent of Schools, commissioners and staff from both organizations. Both the city and school district contribute funds annually for capital projects and maintenance of all outdoor athletic facilities and playgrounds in East Grand Rapids.

Bill was very active with MRPA. He held the offices of President, President Elect, Past President, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President and Board Member. He served on key committees over the years: Summer and Winter Conference Chairperson, Athletic Chairperson, and Certification Committee. Bill was a recipient of the MRPA Fellowship Award in 1979. With a mission to create an organization to assist park and recreation professionals in sharing knowledge and collaborate on various projects, Bill played a vital role in the formation of the West Michigan Recreation and Park Association (WMRPA).

Bill was active in other organizations as well: Kemper Military School & College (Board of Trustees, President of Alumni Association); Blodgett Hospital (helped initiate a health screening program for city employees); Cannonsburg National Ski Patrol (10 years); East Grand Rapids Community Action Council (member).

Bill continues to be involved in the field of parks and recreation as a Sales Representative with Miracle of Michigan. He understands the needs of the customer and can offer critical viewpoints when designing a playground, splash pad and other park amenities. He is devoted to customer satisfaction and the successful completion of any project he undertakes.

**John "Bill" Rhodes is greatly respected by his peers for bringing a high level of honesty and integrity to both his personal and professional life. He is upbeat, straightforward, and a huge advocate for the Parks and Recreation profession.**

## GERALDINE JACKSON

Geraldine (Geri) Jackson turned her love for the City of Detroit and its people, into a 36-year career of serving the city in a wide variety of responsible roles in the Recreation Department. She began her career as a Recreation Leader and Tot Lot Supervisor. After twenty-one years as a Recreation Supervisor and Senior Recreation Supervisor, she was appointed East District Recreation Supervisor where she served admirably until her retirement. With her commitment to providing quality recreational experiences through the recreation centers, playgrounds and parks in the city, Geri enriched the lives of thousands of Detroit youth. She was affectionately known as "Miss Jackson" at the recreation centers, and worked on projects to further her vision of making Detroit a better place to live.

Geri received both her bachelors and masters degrees from Wayne State University. She continually promoted the need for a college education and the strength of the programs at Wayne State.

Geri's passion for track and physical fitness led her co-found the Detroit Striders Track Club. The Striders are known throughout the world for the development of outstanding track athletes. Additionally, Geri served the Michigan High School Athletic Association as a State Final Official for track and cross country for fourteen years.

Geri's commitment to the area of physical fitness was recognized when she was appointed to the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports in 1992, and was re-appointed to represent the general public through 2011. She was recruited by the Michigan Fitness Foundation in 1994 and continues to serve on their board.

Geri's desire to make Detroit a better place to live went beyond recreation. In 1985 she founded and was chosen President of the Northeast Council of Block Clubs, an organization she still serves. Upon retirement, she became involved in Head Start, attended a National Head Start Parent Workshop and became involved in the Fisherman Ministry Head Start Program.

Geri has served MRPA in many capacities, most notably on the Scholarship Committee and presently the Hall of Fame Committee. She always encouraged her co-workers to get involved in MRPA.

Geri received the MRPA Fellowship Award, as well as appreciation awards from the Michigan High School Athletic Association; American Business Women's Association; Order of the Fisherman Ministry Head Start; Northwest YMCA; and Northend Youth Improvement Council. She also received the Archdiocese of Detroit Sports Hall of Fame Award.

**Geraldine Jackson has devoted her life to serving others and making Detroit a better place to live.**

## GERTRUDE CROSS

Gertrude “Trudy” Cross has been paving the way for senior citizens since 1947 when she began her career as Senior Citizen Director for the City of Flint, retiring in 1980. She then worked for the Mott Foundation as a Grant Facilitator for 17 years until 1997. During this time (1983-1995), she also served as an instructor at Central Michigan University, teaching about senior citizens’ needs and creative programming for older adults.

Trudy was at the forefront of senior citizen programming. Along with being the first in the country to hire a full-time Senior Adventure Coordinator to organize day trips and extended trips, she was among the very first to write a book about programing ideas and a procedural travel manual for staff working with seniors. Trudy formed partnerships with Mott Community College, the Flint Board of Education and MRPA to develop and implement workshops for Senior Citizen Coordinators. She made sure that senior leaders were given many exciting ideas for programming their centers. She traveled throughout Michigan and surrounding states, assisting staff in other cities to organize senior citizen programs and establish senior centers in their communities. Trudy believed that park and recreation activities lead to healthy lifestyles. In 1971 she collaborated with Purdue University to film a documentary about the senior citizen programs in Flint. Along with social and physical activity, she knew the value of continued learning. Trudy completed her bachelor’s degree in 1976 and master’s degree in 1978, both from Central Michigan University.

Trudy served MRPA as a member and often Chairperson of the Gerontology Committee. She was also a member of the Certification Committee and was elected to the MRPA Board of Directors. In 1970, Trudy received the Fellowship Award. Additional community and national awards include: Outstanding Senior Citizen Program from the Council of Social Services; Golden Deeds Award from the Flint Exchange Club; Distinguished Service Award from the NRPA (she served as this committee’s first President); and Who’s Who of American Women.

Trudy served her community on a wider scale as a board member of Flint Retirement Homes, Flint Council of Social Agencies, and Michigan Society of Gerontology.

**Gertrude “Trudy” Cross continues to exhibit passion for and commitment to senior citizens at the local, national, and international level. Her name still invokes respect and acknowledgement from those working with the senior population.**

## JEFFERY T. COUPIE

Jeffery (Jeff) T. Coupie turned an unfortunate 1988 swimming pool accident which left him a quadriplegic with a spinal cord injury into a lifetime of passionate advocacy for adaptive sports, Paralympic athletes and wheelchair sports. He became an accomplished Paralympic athlete in his own right.

Jeff's career began with the Center for Independent Living of Mid-Michigan where he served as a Community Development Specialist. While acting as Coordinator with the Saginaw Bay Technology Council, he helped found and direct Michigan Sports Unlimited, whose mission is to provide recreational and sporting activities to individuals with disabilities.

Michigan Sports Unlimited offers opportunities for all skill levels in golf; wheelchair rugby and basketball; hand cycling; and fitness training. The same opportunities were also available in sanctioned Paralympic competition, which also included swimming; air rifle shooting; track and field events; archery; power lifting; hand cycling; and table tennis.

Since Michigan Sports Unlimited relied on fundraising as its source of income, Jeff worked collaboratively with many other organizations, including the Saginaw Y.M.C.A.; the Field Neuroscience Institute of St. Mary's Medical Center in Saginaw; Saginaw Valley State University; and the Bay County Recreation Division.

Jeff played an integral role in the development of adaptive golf in Bay County. Through grant funding, he acquired a special mobility cart which is made to protect the golf turf from damage. This, along with input from those with experience in adaptive golf, convinced the staff at The Bay County Golf Course to try this activity. It has been very successful – so much so that the original cart has been replaced by a new one.

Jeff also founded sanctioned, regional paralympic games known as "Thunder in the Valley," held each year at Saginaw Valley State University. In 2011, Jeff was the driving force who brought the National Junior Disability Championships to SVSU.

Jeff was also an active participant in adaptive sports. As a member of the Michigan Storm quad rugby team, he competed around the United States and Canada and also played and taught the sport in Columbia.

Jeff received several awards for his role in adaptive sports and advocacy for those with disabilities, including Arenac County Advocate of the Year; Think First VIP Speaker of the Year; and was inducted into the Athletes with Disabilities Hall of Fame.

**Jeffery T. Coupie was a passionate advocate for individuals with disabilities and their need for access to facilities and services.**

## JON J. KIPKE

Jon J. Kipke began his professional career as the Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation in Hazel Park. He then became Assistant Director for Continuing Education and Recreation for the Plymouth Community Schools. He next moved to Ferndale before becoming Deputy Director at Oakland County Parks and Recreation, where he served for more than 30 years.

Jon received both his Bachelor of Science in Recreation Administration and his Master of Arts in Recreation and Park Administration from Central Michigan University. He also graduated from the National Recreation and Park Association Marketing School in Cincinnati Ohio. In addition, Jon taught "Special Event Planning" at Central Michigan University for four years.

Jon served MRPA in many ways including President, Treasurer, Board Member (2 years) and member of the Senior Citizen and Long Range Planning Committees. He's best known for his role in creating and implementing the MRPA Grand Experience. For 47 years, senior citizens throughout the state of Michigan have been able to visit the Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island through this program. The event has been a winner for all involved: the Grand Hotel, MRPA and especially the senior citizens.

During his career with Oakland County Parks and Recreation, Jon's strength in innovation and ability to perceive and implement cutting-edge trends in the parks and recreation industry helped launch Oakland County Parks and Recreation's role as an industry leader. He was part of a team that initiated the first Mobile Recreation units in Michigan to provide recreation in urban areas of Oakland County where park facilities were limited. The innovative units included skate mobiles; puppet mobiles; a fashion mobile with sewing machines and make-up stands; a movie mobile and swim mobiles.

In his role as Deputy Director for Oakland County Parks and Recreation, Jon also served as a mentor for numerous young professionals and interns.

Early in his career, Jon was recognized by MRPA with its Fellowship Award.

**Jon J. Kipke will be remembered for his role in initiating and developing the Grand Experience and assisting in the development of one of the country's outstanding County Parks and Recreation systems.**

## LOUIS F. TWARDZIK

Louis (Lou) Twardzik's career began as Recreation Consultant with the Tennessee Division of State Parks before moving on to his true calling at Michigan State University. He came to MSU as Assistant/Associate Professor in the Department of Resource Development, to join a small cadre of faculty as Cooperative Extension Agents bringing knowledge to practitioners operating parks, recreation areas and tourism destinations. Lou broadened the original scope of the project to include recreation policy.

Lou was able to convince various Deans and Administrators to allow him and his colleagues to add Park and Recreation coursework to the Natural Resources-oriented courses being offered. The positive response was immediate, which led to the creation of the Department of Park and Recreation Resources at MSU, with Lou as Chairperson. The department offered both undergraduate and Master of Science degrees. Lou recognized that other universities would likely soon follow MSU, which would require faculty with specific training in Parks and Recreation. He and several faculty successfully created a Ph.D. program in Parks and Recreation, the first of its kind in the United States and the world. Lou was chairman and professor of this department for 13 years, his last nine years as professor.

Lou served MRPA for four years on the Professional Education Committee, the Legislative/State Recreation Policy Committee and as Chairperson for the 1965 Winter Conference. Most of his outside efforts were devoted to the National Recreation and Parks Association and the World Leisure and Recreation Association. He served on the NRPA Board (Vice President and Board Trustee); President of SPRE; and Executive Committee for the World Leisure and Recreation Association (board member and member). In 1977, MSU hosted the first International Conference on Developing Leadership in Leisure and Recreation. Lou also founded the American Academy of Parks and Recreation Administration.

Lou's list of publications and articles is too lengthy to include, but several appeared in Parks and Recreation Magazine and as MSU Cooperative Extension bulletins.

Lou received his Bachelor of Science at Notre Dame University and his Master of Science in Recreation at Indiana University.

Lou was an early MRPA Fellowship Award winner. He also received Distinguished Service/Merit Awards from N.R.P.A., SPRE, American Institute of Parks Executives, the United States Department of Interior and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Lou received the Eppley Award and Outstanding Alumni award from Indiana University.

**Louis F. Twardzik was a true visionary for Park and Recreation services throughout the world, but "his" students came first.**

## MELVIN G. BAILEY

Melvin (Mel) Bailey began his career in 1960 as Director of Inkster Parks and Recreation. He organized recreation programs for citizens of all ages and initiated year-round programming through cooperative efforts with the school district. Mel was successful in developing three park sites with funding he obtained through the Federal Open Space Program. He moved on to become the first Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Westland where his contributions are reflected in the acquisition and development of new parks and construction of a golf course and community center. The center was named the Melvin G. Bailey Recreation Center in his honor.

Mel believed in community service. He was a devoted Dad's Club member for three Detroit catholic parishes. A volunteer coach dating back to 1937, Mel was an active volunteer in his seven children's sporting, school, and life activities. He was an advocate for children with disabilities, encouraging the community to reach out to those with challenges. Mel was instrumental in establishing the Tri-City Therapeutic Recreation Program with the City of Wayne and Garden City. This program recognized that all individuals require leisure activity and the opportunity to live a healthy lifestyle.

Grasping the importance of MRPA, Mel served on various committees in order to assist the organization: Finance, Youth Development, and Municipal League. He also held the offices of Secretary, First Vice-President, President Elect, and President (1971).

Mel was recognized for his outstanding leadership by the Westland Jaycees (Certificate of Appreciation); Holy Redeemer Alumni Association (Sports Hall of Fame); and MRPA (Fellowship Award.) He is acknowledged as one of the "city fathers" of Westland.

**Melvin G. Bailey had deep personal concern for fulfilling human needs. He lived his life showing respect for and dedication to all people with whom he worked, coached, and volunteered.**



## RONALD R. REINKE

Ronald (Ron) Reinke began his career as a seasonal employee for the Saginaw Parks and Recreation Department and then became Facilities Manager upon completion of his college degree. He moved on to become Assistant Superintendent and then Superintendent for Livonia Parks and Recreation, a position he held for 27 years. Ron completed his professional career serving four years as Assistant Director for Wayne County Parks.

Ron was instrumental in relighting all of Livonia's baseball and softball diamonds and rebuilding all of Livonia's parks. He also oversaw the acquisition and development of Idle Wyld Golf Course, and was part of the team that passed a Charter Amendment recreation millage in Livonia. The millage provides a permanent source of funding for Parks and Recreation in the community. The immediate effect of the millage was an addition to the ice arena; addition and renovation of the Senior Center; and completion of the city's park system renovations. Later the millage provided for the construction of a new Community Center in 2003 which still has a "wow" factor when you walk inside the doors. Establishing cooperative relationships with other agencies for the common good was a key accomplishment for Reinke. He built a strategic partnership with the Livonia Hockey Association (for the operation of the ice arena), and with public schools and other community groups.

An active member of MRPA, Ron served on the Publications Committee, chaired the Certification Committee for many years, and was active with the MRPA Foundation. He held several positions in the G.E.R.M.S. organization throughout his career including Chairperson, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary. Ron was a member of the Livonia Community Education Council; Anniversary Committee Board of Directors; Optimist Club; YMCA Board of Directors; as well as the Detroit Metropolitan YMCA Facilities Improvement Committee. In addition to his responsibilities as the leader of the Parks and Recreation Department, he served on the Central Michigan University Alumni Association Board. For the past 12 years, he has been an outstanding member of the CMU Recreation, Parks and Leisure Services Advisory Committee. For his dedication in giving back to students who have come after him, Ron was presented with the CMU Distinguished Alumni Award.

Ron has been a featured speaker at MRPA and NPRA conferences. Additionally, he has made presentations at the Michigan Festivals and Events Association Conference. Topics included: Going from Free to Fee; Don't Throw Out That Old School; Security and Safety at Your Festival; Fireworks Roundtable: How to Shoot Fireworks Safely at Your Event.

**Ronald R. Reinke believes that park and recreation agencies provide critical outlets for the physical, spiritual and psychological well-being of each individual in a safe and economical manner.**

## THEODORE D’PULOS

Theodore “Ted” D’Pulos began working for the City of Wayne Parks and Recreation Department in 1954 while completing his college degree. He then taught Physical Education at Redford High School for eight years while continuing to work for the Parks and Recreation Department. After leaving the teaching profession, he became Recreation Supervisor for the City of Wayne. Six years later Ted was appointed Director of the department; a position he held for 25 years.

When Ted began his career, recreation was merely a footnote in the Wayne City Charter; the Director of Parks and Recreation was not even mentioned. During his tenure, he elevated the department to a level equal to other City departments. He played a part in establishing an ordinance to protect the department’s standing. Under his leadership, the full-time staff doubled in size to 12, and seasonal employees increased from 12 to 80. The number of parks grew from three to 18 parks.

Ted led the charge for two successful bond issues. In 1974, he was instrumental in passing a millage for building a state-of-the-art community center – one of the first in the Midwest. The center housed an ice arena, banquet and meeting rooms, racquetball courts, and offices. Additions were made over the years, including a health club with exercise rooms, private saunas, whirlpools and locker room facilities. Recreation Directors came from afar to tour the center, which inspired them to build community centers in their own communities. In 1994, a second millage was passed, this time for an indoor aquatic facility. A previous pool had been closed down due to costly maintenance expenses. Ted did not want the new pool to eventually come to the same fate. He devised a millage plan that included a charter amendment: the millage levy would be 1 mil for parks and recreation *forever*, with the first 25 years of the millage used to pay off the debt for the new aquatic project. Ted was also responsible for the formation of the Wayne Recreation Foundation, which provides opportunities for tax-deductible donations and opened the door for fundraising collaborations.

Ted was a member of MRPA for 29 years, serving on the Athletic and Finance committees. He was a President of the Southwest Metro Executive Group (G.E.R.M.S.) and the Wayne Kiwanis Club.

Ted was inducted into the Wayne/Westland Athletic Hall of Fame in 1993 and received the Wayne Memorial Distinguished Alumni Award in 1994.

**Theodore “Ted” D’Pulos did not sit and wait for things to happen; he was a man who made things happen. His commitment and passion for the Parks and Recreation profession is reflected in all his accomplishments.**