

Inaugural Class of Distinguished Alumnus

Inducted October 21, 2016

Lee Yeager graduated from Catawissa High School in 1940. As a youth he earned 10 varsity letters for the Lions and helped lead his alma mater to a district soccer championship. His athletic prowess earned him a baseball scholarship to Colorado State but that opportunity was temporarily halted by WWII and his service in the U.S. Army. Lee achieved the rank of First Lieutenant with the 83rd Thunderbolt Division, 1st Battalion, 31st Infantry serving in France and southern Germany.

Upon his return to civilian life he went to work at Briesh's Dairy and became a partner in the Rider and Yeager Dairy. He later became a production supervisor at Merck in Riverside. He retired in 1985 as the plant director of personnel of Reneer Films. In addition to working and raising a family, he was active in his community. Recognized as a tireless supporter of students and education, Lee was a member of the Catawissa and Southern Columbia Area School Boards for 22 years (1954-1976), providing steady leadership in helping the Southern Area community transition to a joint school district. He was a volunteer coach and mentor for hundreds of area youth and was instrumental in bringing football to the area with the establishment of the Catawissa Redskin Midget Football Team, serving as its first president. Lee was also an active member of the Catawissa American Legion and Catawissa VFW, a charter member of the Catawissa Boat Club, and a 32nd degree Free and Accepted Mason, with membership in the former Catawissa Lodge for 51 years.

John Yocum graduated from Roaring Creek Valley High School in 1957. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Agronomy from Penn State University in 1961 launching a 41-year career in agriculture that according to his nominators, was marked with "dignity, professionalism, and respect for others." John was hired by the University as an instructor in 1961 and remained there until his retirement in 2002. Working full-time, John continued his studies earning a Master's Degree from PSU in 1969. He served as an Assistant Professor for the University from 1970-1980 and as a Senior Research Associate from 1980-2002. From 1961 to 2002, John served as the Scientist-in-Charge of the Southeast Agricultural Research and Extension Center, a 155-acre farm located in Lancaster, Pa. His principal area of activity during this time was agricultural research including crop breeding, weed science, and cover crops. His research and extension work is credited with greatly expanding Pennsylvania's soybean production from an average yield of 29 bushels per acre to 49 bushels per acres. His work also allowed for double-crop production of soybeans demonstrating that southeastern Pennsylvania farmers could grow soybeans following barley or wheat harvest. Since 1971, soybean production in Pennsylvania has grown from 32,000 to 610,000 acres. Upon retirement, John returned home to the Roaring Creek Valley where he is an active member of his community. John is Secretary of the Roaring Creek Alumni Association and has served as a Southern Columbia Area School District Board of Education member since 2007.

Ronald "Buddy" Knoebel graduated from Ralpho Township/Southern Area Joint High School in 1961. Upon graduation Buddy earned an A.B. in Sociology from Lycoming College. While at Lycoming he was a two time Middle Atlantic Conference Champion (1964 and 1965) and was named MAC Outstanding Wrestler in 1964. He won the 1965 NCAA College Division National Championship. He was later inducted into the inaugural class of the Lycoming College Athletic Hall of Fame and the District IV

Wrestling Hall of Fame. For the past 50 years Buddy has been an inspiration and driving force behind the success and growth of the family enterprise, H.H. Knoebel Sons. As a member of the 3rd generation of the business entity he currently serves as Secretary and Co-Manager of the amusement resort, along with managing day-to-day operations of the park. Knoebels has been recognized at the local and national level, competing with the best in the amusement industry, and has provided countless jobs to area students. Buddy was nominated for this award as a “well-decorated high school and collegiate student-athlete, a true community activist, and an outstanding business partner.” He has served as a trustee and elder with the Elysburg Presbyterian Church and Board member and President of the Pennsylvania Amusement Parks Association as well as the Columbia Montour Visitors Bureau. He was on the WVIA Board of Directors and the Pennsylvania Travel Council. He is currently Vice-President of the Shamokin Salvation Army Advisory Board and many other local charities. Buddy has earned the respect and gratitude of those for whom he serves- his church family, his neighborhood residents, and his peers in the amusement industry.

Dr. John Spence Reid, 1976 graduate of Southern Columbia Area High School. Spence is a Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery and Division Chief of Orthopaedic Trauma at Penn State University's College of Medicine and Milton S. Hershey Medical Center. Dr. Reid received a BS in Mechanical Engineering from Lehigh University and MD from Penn State University in 1985. He completed an orthopaedic surgery residency at the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center in 1993, followed by an orthopaedic trauma fellowship in 1994 at the R. Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center at the University of Maryland. Dr. Reid returned to Penn State following fellowship training and was named Division Chief in 2006. In 2010 he coordinated Operation Smile/Partners in Health, during which he and a team of other physicians, nurses, and technicians provided medical care to the victims of the Haiti earthquake.

Dr. Reid is a member of the AO and Methods of Ilizarov teaching faculty. He is on the review board of the Journal of Orthopaedic Trauma, as well as the orthopaedic surgeon representative on the Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania Trauma Systems Foundation which oversees trauma care for the state of Pennsylvania. He has received the resident teaching award in Orthopaedics at Penn State University Medical School. His research interests include all aspects of orthopaedic trauma care. He specializes in orthopaedic surgery and orthopaedic trauma. He has received research grants from the Orthopaedic Trauma Association.

Linda Miller graduated from Southern Columbia Area High School in 1980. She was nominated as a Distinguished Alumnus for her “advocacy of wellness and fitness” and for being “a promoter for positive thinking.” During her high school years Linda was an exceptional athlete earning 10 varsity letters through participation in field hockey, basketball, and track and field. She was a key member of the 1977 field hockey team that captured the silver medal in the PIAA state title game. At the collegiate level Linda medaled in the discus in Middle Atlantic Conference League competition. She earned a B.S. in Health and Physical Education from Ursinus College, and later a master's degree in motor development from West Virginia University. Through the years Linda has coached track and field at West Virginia University and Hempfield High School, basketball at Pottsgrove High School, and has been a PIAA field hockey official. In 2010, Linda was inducted into the Bernie Romanoski Chapter of the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame. Since 1989, Linda has served Hempfield (Pennsylvania) High School as a Health and Physical Education teacher. She is also her school district's Wellness Coordinator. In 2013, Linda was named a Health and Physical Education Teacher of the Year by the Lancaster Lebanon Association for

Health and Physical Education Recreation and Dance. The award is given to teachers who conduct a quality physical education program consistent with NASPE standards, utilize innovative learning experiences to meet the needs of all students, serve as a positive role model and participate in professional development.

Dr. Eric Feese, *Southern Columbia Area High School Class of 1988*. Attended Wilkes University on a combined academic and wrestling scholarship. He was captain of the wrestling team and was named a Division I Wrestling Academic All-American in 1992 and 1993. He graduated in 1993 with a perfect 4.0 GPA, becoming the 12th student in the history of Wilkes to accomplish this feat. He was also named the Science Valedictorian earning a B.S. in Biology and a Minor in Chemistry. Eric continued his studies at Drexel University's Hahnemann School of Medicine where he ranked first in his class for the first two years of book study (the last two years involved clinical rotations). He was inducted into the Zeta Chapter of Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honor Fraternity, an award reserved for the top 5% of a class. He was the recipient of the Charles Block Memorial Award for Excellence in Internal Medicine and Cardiology, graduating in 1997. He completed his residency in Emergency Medicine at Geisinger Medical Center serving as a flight physician from 1998-2000. He graduated in 2000, at the 91st Percentile in the nation based on emergency medicine board certification testing. Currently Eric is a partner, stockholder and elected board member of Centre Emergency Medical Associates. He also serves as Co-Assistant Medical Director for the Emergency Department of Mount Nittany Medical Center, and as Medical Director of the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program at Mount Nittany, a program which offers state-of-the-art forensic and medical services to victims of sexual assault. He is ranked in the 99th percentile of physicians among similar hospitals for patient satisfaction with their emergency department care.

Lieutenant Colonel Jason Feese, *Southern Columbia Area High School Class of 1990*. Jason was nominated as Distinguished Alumnus for his unwavering service to country and others. Jason earned a B.S. in Nursing from Wilkes University in 1996. A stellar student-athlete, Jason earned much recognition on the gridiron being named a Division 3 All-American, the top defensive lineman in the Middle Atlantic Conference (1993) and the Wilkes-Barre Downtown Touchdown Club's 1995 Defensive Lineman of the Year. In 2013, he was named to the Middle Atlantic Conference 100 All-Century Football Team. In 1998, Jason enlisted in the Air Force as a First Lieutenant. During the Iraq War he was stationed at Landstuhl Air Force Base Germany where he was an OR nurse treating surgical patients who sustained war injuries. He later was assigned to Langley AFB in Virginia where he was Officer in Charge of Surgical Services Squadron, Urology Services, Orthopedic Services, and Surgical Tissue Management. While stationed in Virginia, he earned a MS degree in Health Sciences/Health Care Management from Touro University International graduating Summa Cum Laud. He was later stationed at Mountain Home AFB in Idaho where he served as Surgical Services Flight Command. In October 2016, Jason was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and presently serves as Deputy Commander of Surgical Services at Andrews AFB in Maryland.

Laura Cook, *Southern Columbia Area High School Class of 2006*. Laura graduated from Bucknell University in 2011 with B.S. and M.S. degrees in Chemical Engineering. Laura's master thesis *Investigation of the Hygroscopic and Morphological Properties of Atmospheric Aerosols* served as early evidence of her interest in reducing environmental pollution, an accomplishment she is achieving through her work with Corning, Inc., a Fortune 500 Company. As a Senior Process Development Engineer in the company's Fiber Optic Manufacturing Plant in Wilmington, North Carolina, Laura registered a

patent application (and a technical report) for a fiber optic NOX sensor that is capable of reducing gas emissions by 80%. Since 2014, Laura has served as Corning's Project Manager for Emerging Pharmaceuticals Technology at its Sullivan Park Research Center in Corning, New York, creating new product lines and registering another patent application. She also serves as technical lead for 3D printing projects (1 patent application) and as a project/technical lead for various optical communication projects. In addition to her contributions in research, problem-solving, and innovation, Laura also serves on leadership teams which develop and promote the advancement of women in the professional workplace, including their service as scientists and in assuming management responsibilities.