



## Boys and Girls 2026 Basketball State Championships Dedication Ceremony at Mohegan Sun



CHESHIRE, Conn. – The CIAC kicks off its Basketball State Championship Weekend with the Boys and Girls Basketball State Championships Dedication Ceremony at Mohegan Sun on Friday, March 20. Nine distinguished individuals will be celebrated. The Dedication Ceremony is open to the public and the media. It will begin at 5pm and be held in the Cabaret Theatre at Mohegan Sun.

The 2026 CIAC Boys and Girls Basketball Tournaments will be dedicated to **Gary B. Franklin, Jr.** Gary is the Principal at Northwestern Regional High School in Winsted. The former Head Boys Basketball Coach at Thomaston High School, he's been a member of the CIAC Boys Basketball Committee since 2018, he became Committee Chairperson in 2021 and has served on the CIAC Board of Control since 2022.

*The following individuals will receive Merit Awards:*

**Larry Anderson** served as the Head Boys Basketball Coach at Tolland High School from 1983-2008, amassing 342 wins. His Tolland teams earned 19 consecutive CIAC tournament winning two league titles while reaching the state semifinals 3 times, and the state finals two times. He served on the CIAC Boys Basketball Committee from 1997-2007.

**David M. Danko** has played, coached, and worked at Fairfield Warde High School – formerly known as Andrew Warde High School and Fairfield High School – since his arrival as a freshman in 1982. He is now nearing 530 career wins as the head coach of the Fairfield Warde girls basketball team, recently completing his 33rd season where Danko's teams had appeared in seven Fairfield County Interscholastic Athletic Conference championships, winning three times, and were state runner-up in the CIAC state tournament three times.

**Shawn Donovan** joined the International Association of Approved Basketball Officials (IAABO) in 1987, and he's been a member of CT Board 9 ever since. He has served in Committee Chair roles for Board 9 and as Board President from 2011-2013. He is currently serving as state board representative. Shawn has been an assignor of officials for the CT Special Olympics holiday festival since 2013, as well as refereeing at the event.

**Charles (Charley) Harbach** has been an International Association of Approved Basketball Officials member (CT Board 7) since 1987. He has been selected to officiate eight CIAC State Championship games. Since 2007 Charley has been a rules interpreter for Board 7. From 2019-2024, he also served as the state rules interpreter for the CIAC and CT State Board 5. His work with CIAC has been important and impactful. Charley worked with CIAC Officials Association Staff Liaison Dan Scavone to co-write state COVID protocols and mask break policy, a revised ejection policy, the sit-a-tic policy, and shot clock protocols.

**Alan Piccolo** is a dedicated educator, coach, and athletic administrator whose career reflects nearly three decades of commitment to students and athletics in the Waterbury community. In 2007, he became the varsity boys basketball coach at Wilby High School, leading the program through the 2023-24 season. In 2016, Alan was appointed Athletic Director at Wilby High School. In this leadership role, he has overseen the growth and success of the school's athletic programs while hosting numerous NVL boys basketball tournaments. In serving as a site director for CIAC neutral site boys and girls basketball games, Alan is helping provide high-quality competitive experiences for student-athletes across Connecticut.

**Erik Dobratz** worked as a News 8 (WTNH) Sports Producer for several years, until he made the move to on-air sports reporting in 2011, where he has been working with Sports Team 8 as an anchor/reporter ever since. In that time, he has traversed the state to capture the highlights and tell the stories of high school athletes across a wide range of sports. He has treated coverage of high school athletes with the same importance, excitement and professionalism as he does with college and professional teams. Erik is a graduate of Old Saybrook High School where he played football, basketball and baseball – serving as a captain for the basketball and baseball teams.

**John Pierson** has been at News 8 (WTNH) for 35 years, his first four as an intern. In 2001 he became the weekend sports anchor and in January of 2016 was promoted to the position of Sports Team 8 Sports Director. A graduate of Eli Whitney Tech in Hamden, John played high school basketball and baseball. As a television journalist he has covered countless CIAC games, events, and championships. If it's a big game in high school sports in Connecticut, you can bet that John or his WTNH colleague Erik Dobratz will be there to cover it with enthusiasm (shooting their own video highlights), their trademark professionalism, and a deep well of historical knowledge of CIAC sports.

**Dan Scavone** joined the CIAC as an Executive Staff member in the summer of 2019 after a lengthy career in education, most notably as an athletics administrator, including being athletic director at four different CIAC member schools. At CIAC Dan is the Sport Administrator for Field Hockey, Wrestling, and Boys and Girls Lacrosse. He's also the Staff Liaison to all the Officials Groups in all sports statewide and the Assistant Tournament Director for Boys Basketball. Before becoming an Executive Staff Member at CIAC, he served the CIAC Eligibility Review Board, Boys Basketball Committee, Michael's Cup, and CIAC Chemical Health Committee. At the league level Scavone served as both the Vice President and President of the Naugatuck Valley League and later as Commissioner of the Central Connecticut Conference. Prior to CIAC Dan served as a collegiate and high school basketball official, working CIAC state championship games in 1996 and 2014.

The dedication ceremony begins a full weekend of tournament championship action – five boys and five girls basketball finals will be played at Mohegan Sun Arena Saturday and Sunday. The ten games will be played in four sessions beginning Saturday morning. In addition, a Unified Basketball Level 1 state championship game will be held on Saturday morning at 11:45am.

**For schedules and tickets to the basketball championships, please visit:**

***ticketmaster***

<https://am.ticketmaster.com/mohegan/buy/CIAC>