

St Louis Alumni Association

Newsletter, Summer 2014

September 9, 2014

CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE:

Honor the past; prepare for the future - This past June marked the 44th year of the closing of St. Louis High (Regional High). Though that is a fact many would rather forget, it nonetheless marks a milestone that resonates in our school history. For the 1970 graduating class it brought the moniker of forever being known as the schools last class to graduate from St. Louis. For the over 100 coed underclassmen who were now moving to Biddeford High, Thornton Academy, Cheverus or McCauley High schools in the fall that year, it was traumatic. For the faculty, past graduates and scores of Catholic friends and family members it was a disappointing acceptance of a reality. But for a large group of upset and determined graduates it was a call to arms. A call to sustain the spirit of our beloved school far into the future. That group was the St. Louis Alumni Association. Instead of wilting under the possibility that the Association would also fade away, that group of motivated believers promulgated a vision that endures today.

Throughout the 70's, this group of motivated believers promulgated a vision to arms. A call to sustain the spirit of our beloved school far into the future. Social activities, bingos, alumni field days, fund raisers, battle of the bridge events, golf tournaments, 50/50's, cribbage and card playing, running skating rinks, among other things, went hand and hand with increasing financial donations for scholarship awards and support of local area youth sports programs. In 1983 a block buster deal was negotiated whereby the City of Biddeford purchased our athletic fields at West, Hill and Prospect Streets with the stipulation that the fields forever be known as St. Louis Field. Since then thousands of young men and woman have played sports in the friendly confines of St. Louis Fields #1 and #2 sustaining many St. Louis football and baseball athletic memories. That sale enabled the Association to purchase land on Route 1 and construct our Alumni Hall in 1985. Hanging distinctively on the hall walls are portraits of every graduating class along with former Association Presidents. The oft looked at pictures are a proud reminder of a storied past.

The Association reached a zenith in 2000 when we had over 1,100 members. June of 2000 was also the year that the Association first confronted a contentious and dividing issue- whether to allow female graduates of St. Louis Regional high and women to become members. A majority vote cast by the over 50 attendees at the 1970 annual meeting voted no. It must be noted that the 50 voters probably had an historical perspective based on the fact that the Alumni had always been for purpose of supporting St. Louis male athletic programs. That vote caused a rift in our ranks that still reverberates today. The Association persevered though it seemed to be the start, but not the sole reason, of declining membership and volunteer participation.

From 2001 to the present, our activities adjusted to emerging social changes of the era: a decline in social drinking, dance events and a general apathy for joining and participating in fraternal and civic organizations in the community. Those factors, along with our aging alumni

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population, continue to impact our operations. During those years we saw a steady down turn in membership and active involvement in Alumni events. However, revenues from our bingos along with our golf tournament, sporadic donations to the Alumni, hall rental fees and wise financial investments kept us afloat financially and we continued to sustain our scholarship and athletic program donation commitments.

Over the past 4 years we've had to invest in our infrastructure and property grounds. Repaving the parking areas, a new outdoor sign and other general repairs incurred major costs. In 2013 a major \$100K donation from an anonymous alumni member to our scholarship funds enabled us to increase both the number and amount of scholarships we award to area graduates. Our ongoing prayers to St. Louis were answered with that generous donation.

As Bob Dylan famously wrote, the times they are a changin'. While we stand proud of many past accomplishments, we need to recognize the present realities and reposition the Association for the future. We will adapt and find ways to not only survive but thrive, just like our predecessors did in 1970 when the schools doors closed. The needs of our area youth today are, in anything greater today than in the past. For example, the Alumni Association granted \$12,000 in scholarships to area youths last year and donated close to \$15,000 in support to youth boys and girl's area sports programs. No one in the Biddeford area is doing as much as the Alumni Association is.

So how do we prepare for the future? Your new Alumni board is going to pursue three key initiatives this year. First, we will update our membership database. Second, we will prepare and implement an annual operational budget. And third, we will write a strategic plan that will focus on the near term (three to five year future) of the Alumni. The board, along with input from membership, must find a workable approach to grow our membership and revenue sources. Fortunately we have a board and a handful of workers eager to face the challenge. We also have several Alumni from around the country who have pledged their support. In the next few months we will jumpstart these initiatives and report our progress at our Christmas social.

The support of all Alumni and Association membership is key to our future. So please promote the Alumni whenever you can, give what you can financially; volunteer in some capacity, attend our meetings or annual Alumni events and say a prayer to St. Louis, to help us preserve and sustain our Association.

SPORTS TRIVIA: (Answers below)

(1) How many Class 1A"1 State of Maine football championships did St. Louis Teams win?
(Hint: Bob Cote coached all 3)

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(2) How many Telegram League baseball championships did St. Louis teams win? (Hint: Bob Cote was the coach)

ELECTIONS- Our newly elected Board of Directors contains a number of new faces. Michael Beaupre and Roger Normand, class of 1970, Donald Couture The needs of our area youth today are, in anything greater today than in the '63, Mike Dion '70 and Roger Tremblay were re-elected to the Board. Paul Brunelle '54 was elected to a three year term as a trustee. John Thibault '65, will serve as the Association's new chairman of the board, Roger Gobeil '63 as the new secretary and Norm Brunelle '53 as treasurer for the 2014-2015 year. The majority of the Board is now made up class of 61' thru '70 grads who have stepped up to carry the torch of the 50's graduates, and key St. Louis non-grads who have been the Association's mainstay many years now. Please give them your full support.

TRIVIA ANSWERS:

(1) St. Louis won 3 State Class A football championships.

1958 Won 9 Lost 0

1961 Won 9 Lost 0

1964 Won 9 Lost 1

(2) St. Louis won 1 State Telegram baseball title in 1956: Won 11 Lost 5

VOLUNTEERS - We are in need of volunteers to assist at our Bingo and other activities. If you have a few hours a month to give and would like to help, please contact any member of the board. UPCOMING EVENTS:

Monthly Meetings; 10 September, 8 October, 12 November at 6:30pm at the Alumni Hall;
Christmas Social- 12 December.

Please visit our Alumni website for more information on our Association.

<https://sites.google.com/site/stlouisalumnibiddeford/>