

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

Tom Stout always believed in giving back

The Blair County Sports Hall of Fame's first two Community Service Award winners, John Conlon and Johnny Robertson, were pillars in the Altoona Parochial Football League and Altoona Boxing Club, respectively. The third recipient has had equal longevity in the George B. Kelley Federation.

Tom Stout, who has been a team manager, league president and served as the Federation's driving force for more than 40 years, will be honored at the Hall of Fame's 10th banquet tonight at the Blair County Convention Center.

"Tom Stout's name has been synonymous with youth baseball and he's given a lifetime of dedication to make sure teenage youth in Blair County have had an opportunity," Hall of Fame president David Andrews said. "I think he's extremely deserving of this award."

Stout, 65, began playing in the Federation in 1952. He loved the game and took an interest in the behind-the-scenes fundraising that kept his team, 5th Ward, and the league thriving.

"I was involved from its inception because my next-door neighbor was Rudy Pavlick and he was one of the men who was active in the Federation from the 5th Ward," Stout said. "I got to see everything from the beginning. We'd go out and knock on doors asking for donations to help the team. Each guy got assigned so many blocks."

"I've been raising money for the ball teams all my life."

The Federation recently celebrated its 50th year and has been honored by the National Amateur Baseball Federation for its success.

"I'm proud beyond what I could ever say," Stout said. "I just hope it will be here another 50 years."

Shortly after he was finished playing in the Federation in 1955, Stout became a coach for 5th Ward, working with manager Tommy Irwin Sr., who was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1989. When Irwin stepped aside to manage in the City League, Stout became 5th Ward's manager in 1961. He was 21 years old.

In 1967, during the Vietnam War, 5th Ward merged with 9th Ward and 12th Ward and became Corporal Miller. Stout managed the team then and, at age 65, he is still managing today. He stepped down as Cpl. Miller's manager in the '80s when there was a rule that a person couldn't serve in both capacities, but that has since been changed and Stout remains in both roles.

Over the years, the Federation has evolved. It



Community Service winner Tom Stout (right) shares a moment with 2000 inductee Randy Allen.

began as strictly an Altoona league, but has now spread into a Blair County League, including teams from Hollidaysburg, Bellwood, Tyrone, Claysburg, Roaring Spring and Martinsburg and into Cresson.

"We kept moving on," he said. "A number of people from Altoona moved into Hollidaysburg and now we've had teams from Hollidaysburg for over 20 years. Then we moved to the Cove, Martinsburg and Claysburg. We never went out and recruited anybody. They came to us."

A construction worker, Stout has also served on various community boards such as the Altoona Recreation Commission, the Blair County Recreation Board and the Altoona Planning Commission. Many of the people he coached or whose lives he touched in some way are in the Hall of Fame.

"Johnny Moore, Doug West, the Irwins, the Stoops, the Flanagans, they're all 5th Ward boys," Stout said. "5th Ward has a great history."

He is especially grateful to now be standing beside many of them. "I'm shocked, very surprised," he said. "I never really looked for anything."

I just do things because I thought in my life, somebody gave me an opportunity. My cousin Dick (former long-time Altoona Teener League manager) and I used to talk a lot about people giving us a break. We wanted to give something back, too."