

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

Disability didn't deter Grazier

Bellwood Youth League founder will be recognized posthumously

The next football season will mark the 45th in the history of the Bellwood-Antis Youth Football League, and the Blair County Sports Hall of Fame is recognizing the league's founder.

Harold "Bud" Grazier, who formed the league in 1969, will receive the Hall's Community Service Award posthumously during tonight's ceremony.

Despite being confined to a wheelchair after he was injured in a diving accident in 1959, Grazier not only was the driving force behind the BAYFL, he coached the North Side Red Devils until his passing in 2002 at the age of 65.

He is buried close to the Bellwood field, and on his tombstone shows he was the founder of the B-A youth league.

"Bud made a very significant contribution to Bellwood football," veteran B-A coach John Hayes said. "The kids in the youth program were always prepared and enthusiastic. He didn't let his (lack of) mobility affect his passion for the kids or the league."

In addition to the participation of more than 100 football players per year, nearly as many cheerleaders also took part in the league.

Grazier's involvement started by offering tips to kids in his neighborhood. That led to forming a team and then three other teams that comprised the Bellwood youth league. At the end of each season, the league would take 12 of the top players to compete against a team from Tyrone, thus teaching the history of the area's top football rivalry.

"He told me that at the first practice of the Bellwood all-star team, he would explain that this is the first step in their quest to beat Tyrone," Grazier's daughter, Debbie Zacker, said.

Grazier's candidacy for the award was spearheaded by Al Montanaro of Bellwood, who characterized Grazier's "outstanding life-long contribution to the youth football program."

Despite his disability, Grazier "never fell into self-pity and was always an inspiration," Montanaro said.

Grazier and his wife, Loueen, who



Bud Grazier formed the Bellwood-Antis Youth Football League in 1969 and coached in it until his death in 2002.

died in 2011, are survived by Debbie, a son William and five grandchildren. The Community Service Award will be accepted by his granddaughter, Courtney Hammaker.

"Our family is very excited," Hammaker, who played for his grandfather in the Bellwood youth league, said. "It means a lot to us and to Bellwood. He did a lot for the community. He worked really hard to get the program started, and he put a lot of time and dedication into the kids. Playing ability didn't matter: He got the best out of every kid."

Grazier is the Hall's ninth Community Service Award recipient, joining John Conlon (Altoona Parochial League), John Robertson (Altoona Boxing Club), Tom Stout (Kelley Federation), Harry Sickler (Tyrone Monogram Club), Skip Dry (Mansion Park Summer Basketball League), The Miracle League of Blair County, Sue Kovensky (Hollidaysburg YMCA Women's Bas-

ketball League) and Ken Koronowski, founder of the Altoona Area Youth Hockey Association.

He is the first to be recognized posthumously.

"Bud Grazier is one of the most respected people in Blair County sports — for what and how he contributed and for his long tenure," Hall of Fame President Neil Rudel said. "Even though he passed away, the chance to recognize him and his work with the Bellwood-Antis Youth Football League, despite a significant physical challenge, was totally embraced by our board."

Past recipients

1998	John Conlon	2008	Miracle League of Blair County
2000	John Robertson	2010	Sue Kovensky
2002	Tom Stout	2012	Ken Koronowski
2004	Harry Sickler		
2006	Skip Dry		