

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION

Report No. 3

OGDENSBURG CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
OGDENSBURG, NEW YORK

SUBJECT: Board Of Education Discussion re: Naming/Dedication of the
Ogdensburg Free Academy Track & Field Complex

DATE: May 16, 2018

REASON FOR BOARD CONSIDERATION:

The Board of Education shall, by majority vote, approve the naming or renaming of any building or facility or any part thereof owned by the District.

FACTS AND ANALYSIS:

The Board of Education of the Ogdensburg City School District will discuss the naming/dedication of the Ogdensburg Free Academy Track and Field Complex. A proposal had been received by the district requesting board consideration for an additional naming/dedication of the Ogdensburg Free Academy Track and Field Complex, as per the attached proposal.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

No action is recommended, information and discussion only.

APPROVED FOR PRESENTATION TO THE BOARD:



Superintendent

TMV/alf
Attachment

Proposal Presentation to:
Ogdensburg City School District Board of Education

To Be Proposed: Inclusion of Penny Raftis Sharrow's Name to the Official Name of the O.F.A.
Track and Field Complex

Respectfully Submitted/Presented by:

Dr. Diane Para, OFA Class of 1982
Program Director/Professor Sports Management
State University of New York at Canton

Margaret Langley, OFA Class of 1975
Lisa Boyer, OFA Class of 1975
Dianne McCaffery Jeneault, OFA Class of 1984
Jennifer Stitt McDonald, OFA Class of 1984
Julie Hynes, OFA Class of 1985
Amy Farrell, Class of 1995

May 7, 2018

Attached to this proposal is a copy of an earlier letter I submitted electronically to the Board of Education which I would like to include now as part of this proposal. In that correspondence, I provided testimony on the significant contribution Coach Penny Raftis Sharrow had on girl's athletics at Ogdensburg Free Academy over her 33 year career.

I wrote in that first piece that I honestly did not know of all Coach Sharrow's records or numbers – though I suspect relevant. Included in this proposal, I would now like to provide to the Board just how relevant those numbers are and how they, along with the testimony of the first letter, make a case for Coach Sharrow's name to be included on the official naming of the track and field complex and worthy of your consideration.

Her impressive resume and contributions are as follows:

For the school district:

- 33 years of dedicated service to the district and athletic program at O.F.A.
- Coached five different sports:
 - Soccer (8 years JV, 6 years Varsity)
 - Two-time B Division Champions
 - Volleyball (3 years)
 - Coach both JV and Varsity, helped build the program and despite having no gym and playing games on the upper deck of the dome, developed a successful program.

Basketball (11 years)

- York State Coaches Association Century Club Award Winner for 100 or more wins.
- For three years coached both JV and Varsity.
- Four Section X Championships
- Northern League Champions
- First undefeated team in the newly formed Girls Northern League followed by multiple undefeated seasons.
- Served as Basketball Chairperson for three years

Winter Track (19 years)

- Two-time B Division Champions
- Took athletes to State Meet Competitions every year
- Submitted first team from O.F.A. to NYSPHSAA Scholar Athlete program

Spring Track and Field (33 years)

- Coached the girl's track and field program for the entire span of her career
- New York State Coaches Association Century Club Award Winner for 100 or more wins (over 200 meet wins in total)
- Took over 100 athletes to State Meet Competitions
- Helped organize and conduct every Van Dusen meet up until the time the girl's sectionals were moved to Saranac Lake on the same day. Was a significant influence on the promotion of girl's events and recognition at the prestigious event.
- Guided the girl's team to a first place finish to help secure the first Co-ed Van Dusen Champion trophy.
- Named Outstanding Girl's Track and Field Coach by the National Federation of Interscholastic Coaches Association.
- Submitted second team from O.F.A. to NYSPHSAA Scholar Athlete program
- Since her retirement in 2006, she has continued to serve the school district and OFA athletic program by coaching modified girl's spring track and field for four years and modified boy's spring track and field for past three years. In total, Coach Sharrow has been involved with track and field at O.F.A. for 40 years.

- Over her 33 year career, coached and guided hundreds of student-athletes to NAC All-Northern awards and Academic All Northern Awards.
- Was a strong and vocal advocate for academic success first.
- **Only coach in O.F.A. history to earn Century Club recognition in two different sports**
- **In total, she has coached 88 seasons of athletic competition in six different sports.**
- **To not be overlooked, many of the seasons were at a time when she while performing similar jobs as others was paid less and required to do more.**

For the Community:

- Served the youth of Ogdensburg for 27 years during the summer months working with the Ogdensburg Parks and Recreation Department serving as Director of the City Beach, Director of the City Pool, and Director of the City Day Camp
- Introduced track and field to city youth by volunteering to run a local Hershey Track Meet for kids 12 and under and volunteered to bring local winners to the regional competition in Waterloo, NY (5 years)
- Served as Water Safety Instructor Trainer (one of only two in St. Lawrence County to maintain certification to teach and certify instructors.
- Community lifeguard Instructor
- Community First Aid and CPR Instructor
- Kiwanis Youth Soccer Coach (4-5 years)
- Served on Housing Authority Board

We believe Coach Sharrow's tremendous accomplishments, her collective influence and impact on girl's athletics at O.F.A. and on the hundreds of female athletes she coached, her longevity and dedication to the entire athletic program and the school district over a career of 33 years, and her continued contribution & dedication still to this day, has earned her the rightful acknowledgement of honor, appreciation and recognition along with Coach Steve Barlow by dedicating the track complex in both their names.

Therefore, we respectfully propose the following to the Board: to name the new track and field complex:

***Steve Barlow and Penny Raftis Sharrow
Boys and Girls Track and Field Complex***

Penny Raftis Sharrow fought for years on our behalf for what was right and what was fair.

And now, we stand today to fight on her behalf for what we believe to be right and fair.

Having both these worthy coaches' names associated with the complex will permanently plant in history that under their leadership, boy's track and field and girl's track and field at Ogdensburg Free Academy were in the very best of hands and the accomplishments of each and the positive influence on the sport and the athletes they each coached, will stand the test of time.

Good evening. I am Diane Para, I am a 1982 graduate of OFA.

After recently hearing that the track complex was being named for Coach Steve Barlow my immediate reaction was that seemed well deserved but then my thoughts quickly turned to Coach Penny Sharrow.

While a student here I played six sports. So, my time here was to a large extent defined by my sport participation, and my future was very much shaped by those opportunities and by the coaches that were such a significant influence. That is especially true for Coach Sharrow.

Coach Sharrow was not just a coach during her time here. At a time when Title IX was a law in its infancy and had not yet really taken root, we had Coach Sharrow. She was a determined advocate and fighter for equity in the girl's program. She was a passionate voice and emotional presence who was not afraid to speak out and stand tall to ensure that we as female athletes and programs were not just treated the same as the boy's program but more importantly valued the same. I can remember, a number of times seeing Coach Sharrow visibly upset in the office and yes sometimes in tears over something that was just unfair.

Of course as a high school kid, I had a sense of what she did, but I couldn't fully understand how brave that really was and how important – that wouldn't come until I myself became a professional in this field that still struggles with gender equality, acceptance and recognition.

As someone who has had to fight many of the same battles, have witnessed and experienced many of the same inequities, I appreciate now more than ever the fierceness of Coach Sharrow's holding to the simple idea that fair is fair and right is right. And her resolve to never let that be challenged without speaking up.

In an arena where we are preoccupied with records and championships, a lot of really good can get lost. Especially if you are a female. History has shown us that as women in this field we often have to be over qualified, over prepared and over achieve to get the same jobs or same recognition as our male counterparts.

I honestly don't know Coach Sharrow's records or numbers – though I suspect relevant; I do know of her passion and commitment. I also know, whatever her numbers, they take a back seat to the significance and true impact her 33 years had on OFA athletics, the athletes she coached, and the advancement of women sports and female athletes.

For each sport I played during my time at OFA, I had a female coach. Coach Sharrow for three. All of whom helped promote confidence, athletic ability, teamwork, toughness, leadership, and a competitive spirit. Today, the majority of girl's and women's athletic teams nationwide, including OFA, are coached by males.

We must never forget, that the foundation for our girl's program was laid and nurtured by passionate, dedicated, women coaches like Coach Sharrow who faced challenges and barriers that male coaches just didn't have – and who because of the time of their tenure, most may not even know.

Coach Sharrow's records might not echo as much as others, but her voice when needed certainly did. She at times ruffled feathers, was vocal and loud, and maybe at times made some feel uncomfortable. Thank God she did. Her unwavering commitment to the advancement of high school girl's athletics and the athletes she coached far surpasses the significance of wins and titles.

From my view, those are the very reasons she is a role model, a heroine, and someone who should be recognized and heralded as an accomplished coach, mentor, advocate, and committed and dedicated professional, who was as much a contributor to the legacies of OFA athletics as anyone.

To be sure, my time as an OFA Blue Devil was rewarding, enjoyable, memorable and positive. My recollection is that the male coaches and leadership at that time were honorable, respectful, encouraging, and supportive – but naturally inequities existed within the walls and outside. And we still needed that someone to put it on the table– that was Coach Sharrow. And we needed strong female coaches who we could identify with, model, and learn from. Strong women who we could see in leadership positions use their voice. Again, Penny Sharrow.

I appreciate the Board's authority to make decisions on how history is viewed and how those who helped shaped that history are recognized and remembered. I hope due diligence on future considerations presents a wider view and appreciation of the whole landscape of the history of OFA Athletics and Coach Sharrow would duly be recognized and remembered as someone with great impact and importance.

And I want to be clear, my words are in no way a judgement on the success and value of Coach Barlow during his tenure nor are they meant to diminish his deservedness of the recent recognition.

They are meant to put a spotlight on someone who deserves the same stamp of acknowledgement, appreciation, and recognition – which in my opinion is long overdue.

Thank you for allowing me this time.

(5 min. 26 sec)