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**Capital Region Track, Field and Cross Country Hall of Fame
Announces Its Eighth Class of Inductees**

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Summer Pierson, a Niskayuna High School product whose talent and longevity enabled her to compete in the U.S. Olympic Trials a remarkable six times over 21 years, heads the list of 2025 inductees for the ***Greater Capital Region Track, Field and Cross Country Hall of Fame***.

Pierson is among 10 athletes and coaches in the eighth class of inductees who will be honored at the annual banquet on Saturday, Oct. 4, at the Albany Marriott in Colonie. They join an impressive roster of 79 prior inductees that includes Olympians, state and national champions, Section 2 record holders and award-winning coaches and officials.

The discus throw is Pierson's specialty, and she qualified for every edition of the U.S. Trials from 2000 to 2021, the latter at age 42. She advanced to the finals at the trials three times, with a highest finish of sixth. Pierson placed fifth in the prestigious Pan American Games in Brazil in 2007, and again represented the U.S. in winning the discus throw in the 2015 North American, Central American and Caribbean Championships in Costa Rica. Also on the international stage, Pierson is a three-time world champion of the Highland Games.

Pierson, a 1996 graduate, was a state champion in both the discus and shot put at Niskayuna and her discus mark of 154-0 from nearly 30 years ago still ranks third on the all-time Section 2 list. She excelled at Stanford University, as well, placing in the top five in the discus in the Pac-10 Championships all four years, and her 196-0 is the third-best toss in Cardinal history. She went on to set a personal best of 200-10 ½ in the discus in 2013 and has also tossed the hammer 155-6.

The 2025 class of inductees has plenty of speed, from both 50-plus years ago and more recent years. Crosstown rivals Dave Herman of Shaker and Bernie Gansle of Colonie dominated the hurdles and sprints in the early 1970s and went on to make their marks at the University of Florida and Pennsylvania, respectively. Mia D'Ambrosio, being inducted in her first year of eligibility, holds four all-time Section 2 dash records and won state championships for Schalmont five years ago before sprinting for North Carolina State.

Middle distance inductees have an old and new feel, as well, from Al Derry, who excelled on cinder tracks in the 880-yard run for Vincentian Institute in Albany in the 1960s to Hannah Reale, a 2016 and 2017 state 800 champ for Shenendehowa. Her times are among the fastest in area history and she led the Plainsmen to state and national relay titles.

State champions in field events selected are Brittany Dexter Jackson of Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake and Shane Racey of Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk. Dexter Jackson won indoor high jump titles in 2005-06 and the outdoor championship in 2006. Her PRs of 5-8 and 5-8 $\frac{3}{4}$ sit fourth on the all-time indoor and outdoor Section 2 lists. Racey won indoor and outdoor state crowns in the pole vault, and his indoor mark of 16-6 remains atop the Section 2 list.

Veteran coaches Bill Drake of Guilderland and Tom Carpenter of Fonda-Fultonville complete the list. Drake's 30-year career produced some of the finest athletes in area history who achieved high finishes in state competition. He also started the Guilderland International Invitational Meet at Tawasentha Park, which was a staple on the fall schedule for 50 years.

Carpenter tutored a host of outstanding weight throwers and state champions at Fonda, including Ingrid Hantho, who went on to be an Atlantic Coast Conference champion at North Carolina, and Allesandro Saltsman, who threw the discus 190-1 en route to being a State Division 2 shot put and discus winner and Federation discus champion.

Tickets for the induction banquet, \$60, may be reserved at <https://zippy-reg.com/register/hofbanquet> or by visiting runtrackhof.com.

**2025 Inductees, Greater Capital Region
Track, Field, and Cross Country Hall of Fame**

Tom Carpenter (South Glens Falls '79, Springfield, Cortland State '83)

- Recognized in the upper echelon of throws coaches for more than 40 years in this position with the Fonda-Fultonville team. During that tenure, has mentored numerous league, Section 2 and State and Federation champions including Aaron Kimball (2001 shot put), Shane Smith (2010 discus) and Alessandro Saltsman (2022 shot put and discus).
- Instrumental in Fonda-Fultonville's unparalleled track success reflected in 65 league and 57 Sectional championships. Fostered an atmosphere which has allowed his athletes to grow and excel.
- Impact on the track and field community has extended beyond his own team. Has held the position of Adirondack Region throws coach for the Empire State Games, taken athletes to Junior National Meets, organized and taught summer throws clinics, and worked with athletes from other schools.

Mia D'Ambrosio (Schalmont '20, North Carolina State '24)

- Established all-time Section 2 records in the outdoor 100- and 200-meter dashes with times of 11.93 and 23.94 as a junior and equaled the indoor standards of 6.95 for the 55 and 7.5 for the 60 as a senior. Added top-five performances in the 400 outdoors and both 200 and 300 indoors.
- Won the Indoor State and Federation 55-meter dash with the fourth-fastest time in the nation, then placed second in outdoor State and Federation competition in both the 100 and 200. Was runner-up in the New Balance Nationals Emerging Elite 400.
- As a freshman, had numerous podium finishes at North Carolina State and appears on the Wolfpack all-time top-10 lists in the 200 and 300 indoors and the 200, 4 x 100 relay and 4 x 400 relay outdoors.

Al Derry (Vincentian Institute '64 Manhattan '68)

- Unbeaten indoors at 600 yards his junior and senior years in high school with a Capital District best time of 1:17.6. Led his Vincentian team to the 1964 Diocesan League cross country championship.
- As a high school senior in 1964, ran an area best time of 1:55.3 that broke the Albany County record by seven tenths of a second and matched the all-time area record for that distance. Set the meet record at the Schenectady Invitational with an 880-yard time of 1:56.2 and was named the Outstanding Performer of the meet. Catholic high schools were not eligible for Section 2 or State Meet competition in that era.
- Although injured at Manhattan College, lowered his best time in the 600-yard run to 1:11-plus and his best time in the 880-yard run to 1:51-plus.

Bill Drake (Johnstown '57, Hope '61)

- Had an accomplished 30-year career at Guilderland, where his “Long Red Line” chalked up numerous Suburban Council and Section 2 titles. Started the girls’ cross country program at the school in 1975. Grew the Guilderland International Cross Country Championships from humble beginnings to a staple on the fall calendar for 50 years.
- Coached some of the most accomplished athletes in Section 2 history, including his son Dieter, a state cross country runner-up and three-time Section 2 champion in the 3,200 and steeplechase; Bill McCartan, state silver medalist in the 1,600 (4:12.7); Ron DiBenedetti, a 14-2 1/2 pole vaulter in 1969; and Arnel Joyner (triple jump), Josh Zitomer (pentathlon), Bob Davis (pole vault) and Jason Usher (high jump), all second in the State Meets.
- After retiring from Guilderland in 1995, landed in Concord, N.C., where he started the track and cross country programs at the Cannon School. He helped land Cannon’s first state title in cross country in 2001 and launched the Cannon School Cross Country Invitational, which has now been in existence for more than two decades.

Bernie Gansle (Colonie '71, Pennsylvania '75)

- Was the 1970 Section 2 outdoor champion in the 100-yard dash with a time of 9.8 seconds that remained the area record for eight years. Placed third with a time of 9.8 in the New York State outdoor championship meet.
- Was the 1971 Section 2 champion in both the 100-yard dash and as a member of the 880-yard relay.
- At Penn, he competed three times in the NCAA outdoor championships as a member of the 440-yard relay team. The 1975 440-yard relay team ran 39.79 and had the eighth-best time in the United States that year. He had a personal best time of 9.6 for the 100-yard dash in college.

Dave Herman (Shaker '71, University of Florida '75)

- Dominated Section 2 in his signature event, the low hurdles, during his high school career. Selected as New York State Indoor Track Athlete of the Year in 1971. Received significant recognition and rankings on the national scene, as well. Established 12 school records at Shaker.
- Lost very few sprint races over the course of high school participation. During his sophomore year, was undefeated locally in the 100 and 220-yard dashes, as well as the 120-yard high and 180-low hurdles.
- Having been recognized for his potential in the intermediate hurdles after a senior year win in the Glen Loucks Games, accepted a full scholarship to the University of Florida. During his freshman year, set a school record for the indoor 70-yard low hurdles and placed fifth in the outdoor 440-yard intermediates at the Southeast Conference Championships.

Brittany Dexter Jackson (Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake '06, Sacred Heart '10)

- Dominant Section 2 high jumper during her four-year career at Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake, winning five Suburban Council and seven Sectional championships. Won three state championships and was a place winner in three other State Meets. Personal bests of 5-8 indoors and 5- 8 3/4 outdoors place her third and fourth, respectively, on the all-time lists.
- Exhibiting versatility, excelled in the hurdles with seven Sectional and four Suburban Council championships. Is on the all-time leaderboard for the

200-meter dash and won this event in the 2006 Sectionals. Named The Times Union Athlete of the Year for Track and Field in 2006.

- Pursuing higher education at Sacred Heart University, she continued to excel, establishing the school records at 5-10 ½ indoors and 5-7 outdoors. Both remain the school records. Won the Northeast Conference Championship Meet high jump a total of seven times.

Summer Pierson (Niskayuna '96, Stanford '00)

- Qualified for the U.S. Olympic Team Trials in the discus six times from 2000-2021, finishing sixth in 2008. Won the North American, Central American and Caribbean Championships in 2015 in Costa Rica and placed fifth in the 2007 Pan American Games in Brazil.
- State champion in the shot put and discus at Niskayuna. Her 154-0 in the discus still stands third best in Section 2 history. Holds the third-best mark of 196-0 on the all-time Stanford University list and was consistently a top-five finisher in Pac-10 Championship meets.
- Continued competing on the national stage into her 40s, posting a string of top-10 finishes in USATF Championships and three consecutive world championships in the Highland Games. Finished with career bests of 200-10 ½ in the discus and 155-6 in the hammer throw.

Shane Racey (Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk '20, Cornell '24, Kentucky '25)

- Sectional pole vault champion in grades 9, 10, 11 and 12. Set the Section 2 indoor record of 16-6 in the 2020 State Qualifier and won the state title with a meet record jump of 16-2. Was chosen as a New Balance Nationals All-American.
- As a junior in 2019, won the pole vault at the William F. Eddy Meet and the Penn Relays. Was the NYSPHSAA and Federation Meet champion with a vault of 16 feet.
- Was a four-time Ivy League medalist at Cornell in the pole vault. Held the Cornell outdoor record at one time with a vault of 17-7 and remains on the top 10 lists at both Cornell and Kentucky.

Hannah Reale (Shenendehowa '18, Wisconsin '22)

- Holds the Section 2 record in the 1,000 meters (2:50.81) and stands second in the indoor 800 (2:09.05) and third in the outdoor 800 (2:07.27) behind Olympian Diana Richburg. Won individual state outdoor 800 titles in 2016 and 2017 and was nominated as the Penn Relays Girls' High School Athlete of the Meet in 2016. Her 4:26.28 is the fourth-fastest locally in the 1,500.
- As a seven-time All-American, anchored Shenendehowa to state and national championships in the 4 x 800 relay, including area record times of 8:50.58 outdoors and 9:00.34 indoors. Was part of relay teams that earned top-three national meet finishes in the sprint medley, distance medley and 4 x mile relays.
- In cross country, qualified for the Nike Cross Nationals three times, twice with Shenendehowa and once as an individual. Led Plainsmen to three runner-up finishes in the Federation Meet and a second in the State Meet.