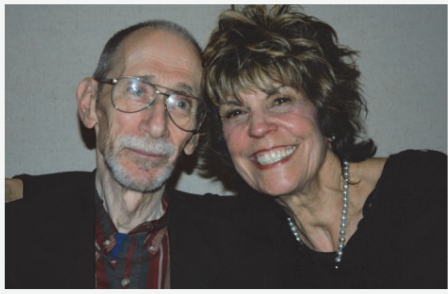


# Donovan Cummings Service Above Self Award

## 2010 Recipient Gay Brasher



In March of 2010 CHSSA lost dear friend and original Hall of Fame Member Donovan Cummings. Donovan's life was a life of service. During his long coaching career Donovan coached at Edison, Stagg and Franklin (at some points simultaneously)! After his retirement, Donovan was as active as ever spending thousands of hours helping to grow our community. Donovan was a generous, loving man who through his career and retirement was committed to the service of others.

Donovan first became a voting member of the CHSSA council in 1963 and remained a voting member until his resignation in May 2008. This is the longest voting tenure since CHSSA began in 1958. He served as YFL president, Area Two Chair, Editor, Curriculum Coordinator, VP Curriculum, VP

Activities, President ('69-72 and '86-90) and Historian. An NFL Hall of Fame member, Donovan wrote and "sold" the speech tab procedure currently used by NFL Nationals and co-chaired the IE tabroom at Nationals for many years. Since retiring he has taught speech to Migrant Ed students in San Joaquin County and returned to Stockton Civic Theater. When asked of his long career, he responded "YES...I WOULD DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN!!!! Debating in high school encouraged me to consider law. When I was a teen, I worked a lot with younger children, especially doing dramatic production. Fortunately, the whole competitive experience dominated. I chose teaching and eventually coaching. BRILLIANT DECISION! I CANNOT CONCEIVE OF ANY PROFESSION MORE REWARDING.! Beautiful students, caring parents, brilliant coaching friends!"

In recognition of Donovan's passion for service the CHSSA began the tradition in 2010 of awarding the "Donovan Cummings: Service Above Self Award" at each state tournament to a coach who has gone above and beyond in the service of others. The organization named Leland coach Gay Brasher who was one of Donovan's dearest friends, and shared his remarkable commitment to service as the first recipient of this award.

Despite her "retirement" from full time teaching in June of 2002, Gay never stopped working and serving others. In fact, nine years after retirement Gay continues to work more hours as a volunteer than most work at the prime of their careers. In addition to her part-time employment at Leland she **volunteers** over forty-five hours per week as the director of forensics of one of the largest and most successful programs in the nation.

In addition to running the Leland program Gay has begun programs at middle schools and elementary schools throughout San Jose. Gay also volunteers at an urban middle school, which has since been named a communications magnet, by teaching speech in seven English classes. She also directs after-school speech programs for middle school students in San Jose Unified. In her "spare time" Gay volunteers at another local high school teaching speech one day a week in its IB program, and teaches speech at the district's continuation school. The curriculum used in these programs is developed by Gay and her Leland students who also generously provide workshops, and performance evenings to help new local forensics programs.

Gay directs two tournaments for students outside of the Leland program. Starting in 1986, she began annual middle school tournaments for the local feeder school. In the spring she will host a middle school forensics tournament offering standards-based events. And since 1992, she has hosted annual speech tournaments for English Second Language students from throughout the Santa Clara School District. She was given the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Associations Good Neighbor Award in 1999. She is a 2008 Honoree for the Tribute to Women Award, honoring Silicon Valley's Executive Women.

Gay served on the CHSSA council from 1985 to 2002: Four terms as president of the CFL and eighteen years as Area I Chair. She was elected to the CHSSA Hall of Fame in 1991 and the NFL Hall of Fame in 2006. A five diamond coach she was named NFL's Coach of the Year in 2000. Recently, Leland's new small auditorium was named in her honor.

True to her humble nature, Gay attributes her longevity in the profession to the help and support she receives from her students, their parents, and the school. She especially enjoys the camaraderie of the California coaches and says tournaments are as much fun for her as they were for her students. "A lot of people should be in the hall of fame," said Brasher in her acceptance speech. "For all the teachers who try to start speech programs who didn't have the education opportunities I had. Or the teachers who don't have parental support and have to do it alone. You guys make it easy for me—you're enthusiastic, you're talented and your parents are supportive. I just go along for the ride. All your energy, enthusiasm, the laughter, the positive outlook—I reap the harvest from you. When I'm around you I don't think I'm at the end of my career—I'm at the beginning."

