

Donovan Cummings Service Above Self Award

2012 Recipient Rita Prichard



The prestigious Donovan Cummings Service Above Self Award is given each year in honor of original CHSSA Hall of Fame member Donovan Cummings who gave selflessly to others until his untimely death in 2010. Donovan's life was a life of service. During his long coaching career he coached at Edison, Stagg and Franklin (at some points simultaneously)! After his retirement, he was as active as ever spending thousands of hours helping to grow our community. He was a member of the CHSSA council from 1963 until May of 2008 — the longest tenure since CHSSA began in 1958. After retirement he 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!!!! I CANNOT CONCEIVE OF ANY PROFESSION MORE REWARDING.! Beautiful students, caring parents, brilliant coaching friends!" Donovan was a generous, loving man who through his career and retirement was committed to the service of others.

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 California High School Speech Association is privileged to name Rita Prichard as this year's Donovan Cummings: Service Above Self Award recipient.

After her own successful high school and college speech and debate experience, she was determined to provide a like experience for her students. During her tenure Rita has run successful "one coach programs" at Galt and Granite Bay offering her students the opportunity to compete in all 12 IE's and debate.

Rita's service, however, extends far past her own students. During her tenure, she served as the president of the Sacramento Forensic League for ten years, hosting the 1994 State Tournament at Sacramento City College and coordinating the judges in 2006 at the Sierra College state tournament. For the past 10 years, Rita has served as the NFL Chair for the Capitol Valley League recruiting new schools and students to make the league stronger than ever. In addition, she has established a JNFL program with feeder middle schools and almost single handedly brought young teams along, ones which eventually participate in CHSSA for Roseville Unified.

Rita's deepest service in speech and debate, however, has been through the work and tireless effort she has put forth as a member of the CHSSA Curriculum committee. Beginning with her contributions to the 1996 *Coaches' Handbook* which served to provide a practical guide for developing and maintaining a competitive speech program. Rita has worked continuously on the development of curriculum materials for the CHSSA and its members. Following in the footsteps of CHSSA's first VP of Curriculum Donovan Cummings, Rita has served as CHSSA's 8th Vice-President of Curriculum since 2004. In her first year, the CHSSA published *Speaking Across the Curriculum* an educational guide to incorporating speaking and listening across the curriculum.

Never has CHSSA invested so much time, money and energy into curriculum as it has under her leadership, and that commitment from the CHSSA council has come from the exemplary results it has seen from Rita's work and the difference that work has made for hundreds of coaches in enhancing their preparation, and thus positively impacting thousands of students.

Of all Rita's impressive accomplishments for others, the exceptional DVDs that have been produced have been amongst the most remarkable. Over the past eight years, CHSSA, under Rita's leadership, has produced professional quality instructional DVD's in Expository, Original Advocacy, Student Congress, Thematic, Original Prose and Poetry, Oratorical Interp and this year Impromptu. Known as the *California Suite*, these entertaining, student friendly DVD's teach the process of preparing and presenting speeches that are exclusive to California's speech and debate competition. Rita has spearheaded the development of these professional quality DVD's. Each DVD features powerful lessons and example speeches that serve to demystify the process to help students and coaches become more successful. Rita has nurtured each DVD from it's original storyboard to the final packaging and distribution. With each DVD she takes great care to protect the integrity of the content and the quality of the presentation. CHSSA Hall of Fame member Shirley Keller Firestone says, "Rita has done a fantastic job of leading the Curriculum committee. It has been fun and productive! Her dedication and professionalism is an inspiration to everyone with whom she works. The DVD's will be helpful to new and veteran teachers and coaches for years to come." Rita's unyielding commitment to providing quality instructional materials, her dedication to her students and her generous spirit will undoubtedly leave an imprint on the CHSSA and its students for generations to come.

