

**HIGHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

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For Immediate Release

**Highland Community Foundation recognizes distinguished alumni**

FREEPORT — On October 20, the Highland Community College Foundation recognized five graduates as Distinguished Alumni at its annual meeting at the Freeport Club in Freeport.

This is the twenty-second year the awards have been presented to individuals who have shown community leadership, made their start at Highland Community College (HCC) and believe in the mission of higher education. Including these new recipients, 118 individuals have been recognized as Distinguished Alumni.

**Craig D. Cary, of Naperville, IL**  
***Nominated by Marguerite McKinney***

An Aquin High School graduate in Freeport, Cary attended Highland from 1970 to 1971. At that time, he was uncertain about his life path and educational goals. He found his time at HCC to be a "significant centering moment" of his life.

Cary recently retired after 36 years working for McDonalds USA, where he held corporate director positions with leadership focus in areas such as business operations, government relations, community engagement, and human resources.

He has served as an advocate or advisory board member for Lexington College in Chicago, Choose DuPage, the Dunham School of Business at Aurora University, the Mayor's Task Force on Summer Youth Employment for the City of Chicago, and additional organizations. He also volunteers with the Ronald McDonald House Charities and the People's Resource Center in DuPage County.

**Tim Engebretson. Knoxville, IL**  
***Nominated by Joel Zink***

Engebretson attended HCC from 1980 to 1982, before transferring to Western Illinois University to complete his bachelor's degree in secondary education. He has been an educator for over three decades, working as a health and driver education instructor and, for 19 of those years, a football coach in the Monmouth, Illinois area.

His colleagues describe him as a dedicated teacher, coach, and mentor to young people, with a caring attitude and warm sense of humor. He has positively influenced hundreds of students over the years, mostly by respecting them and earning their respect in return.

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He is seen as an “all-around great guy” who truly cares about his students’ success. His nominator states, “Tim’s life and career embodies so many of the people with success stories who began their college careers at HCC.”

**Wendy McGath, Freeport, IL**

***Nominated by Jae Hezlep***

McGath graduated from Freeport High School in 1982, but did not begin her studies at HCC until 22 years later, in 2004, when she was a recently-divorced mother of four children. Throughout her time at HCC, she also worked full-time.

McGath earned her bachelor’s degree from Rockford College and has spent her professional career at FHN Family Counseling Center and Norman Sleezer Youth Home, in a variety of counselor and case manager roles.

McGath also volunteers as a member of the HCC Alumni Association Steering Committee and CONTACT, the 24-hour crisis hotline. McGath is a fine example of a “returning adult student” at Highland, who decided to pursue a college education when it was time to regroup and chart a new path for herself.

**Daniel Moore, Freeport, IL**

***Nominated by John and Trudy Moore***

Moore is a 2006 graduate of Freeport High School and a 2008 graduate of HCC. Daniel went on to complete US Army Military Police (MP) training and the University of Illinois Police Academy. He is now working on a degree in Criminal Justice from Columbia College of Missouri.

Moore served as a member of the Freeport Police Auxiliary for several years, and in September, 2015 was sworn in as a Freeport Police Officer. He is also a member of the US Army Reserve Unit, based in Davenport, Iowa, which means he spends one weekend a month and several weeks in the summer in MP unit training. As part of his Army Reserve duties, he was deployed to Cuba in 2014 for one year, guarding the prisoners at Guantanamo Bay Prison.

**Mark Smith, Bettendorf, IA**

***Nominated by Duane and Ruth Smith***

After graduating from Highland in 1977, Smith earned a Bachelor of Science degree from UW-Stevens Point. He then started a 20-year career with the YMCA, working in camp director positions in Wisconsin, Michigan, Massachusetts, and Iowa.

It was during Smith’s time at the Davenport, Iowa YMCA camp that he established camp programming in 2000 for children with special needs. Smith and his wife Vinnie were especially sensitive to the needs of these campers and their parents, since they are parents of a child with a disability.

Smith and Vinnie then founded a year-round respite center, called “Hand in Hand,” for children and young adults with special needs. Mark serves as the CEO, trains staff and volunteers, and works with his board on community outreach and fundraising for the center.

**Photo caption:** At the October 20, annual board dinner of the Highland Community College Foundation, Distinguished Alumni awards were presented to (L to R): Tim Engebretson (Knoxville, IL); Wendy McGath (Freeport); Mark Smith (Bettendorf, IA); and Craig Cary (Naperville, IL). Not pictured: Daniel Moore (Freeport).

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