



2025 Media Award

CAIN CARPENTER



Cain Carpenter is a 2003 graduate of Independence High School in Independence Kansas. He began calling football and basketball games for the IHS Bulldogs in the fall of 2005 while he was still attending Independence Community College. His father, Jeff Carpenter, who had already been calling games for both IHS and ICC as a play by play announcer, got him involved.

Cain began calling games doing color commentary starting with IHS before also calling games for ICC. During that time IHS football was going through a 43 game losing streak. After over four years of consecutive losses in football Cain was fortunate to be able to be a part of calling the game against Fredonia which broke the streak his alma mater was on through that stretch.

In 2013 Cain took over play by play duties for IHS football and basketball games and has remained in the role ever since. Over the subsequent years Cain has been able to call Independence football and basketball games through stretches of success for each team. This includes IHS football with their first playoff win in 2009 and IHS basketball completing a perfect regular season in the 2014-2015 season.

Cain Carpenter is employed by Murfin Media, who has made a commitment to broadcasting high school sports in Independence as well as through the state of Kansas. Currently broadcasting games on Thunder Country 102.9 KBIK-FM out of Independence, Kansas.



MSC Radio Group's Justin Fluke Named 2025 Media Person of the Year by the Kansas Basketball Coaches Association

The Kansas Basketball Coaches Association (KBCA) has named Justin Fluke, President and Owner of MSC Radio Group, as its 2025 Media Person of the Year.

Fluke developed a passion for broadcasting at a young age while growing up in Medicine Lodge, Kansas. After graduating from Fort Hays State University, he began his professional career as Sports Director at KNZA Radio Group in June 2001. Over the years, his role evolved to include sales, management, and eventually ownership, becoming President of KNZA Radio Group in 2022.

In the last three years, Fluke has transitioned and expanded the MSC Radio Group into a network of six radio stations with diverse formats, four online sports video streaming channels, as well as news and sports websites. Under his leadership, MSC broadcasts as many as 10 live high school games any night and provides coverage for more than 50 local teams. The group also produces weekly coaches shows, preview magazines, sports talk and area-wide preview and scoreboard shows, plus schedules, scores and stories on the MSC Sports website.

Today, MSC Radio Group stands as a leading source for high school sports in Northeast Kansas, with over 30 of its 40 employees (including part-time and seasonal staff) directly involved in live sports coverage.

"I'm incredibly honored to receive this recognition from the KBCA," said Fluke. "Promoting student-athletes and coaches has always been a passion of mine, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to help tell their stories—especially in a part of the state known for its successful athletic programs and passionate community support."

Fluke has broadcasted an average of more than 50 live sporting events each of the past 24 years, including dozens of state championships. He has earned multiple honors from the Kansas Association of Broadcasters (KAB), was named KIAAA Sportscaster of the Year in 2006, and received the Hod Humiston Sports Award in 2023. He has served on the KAB Board of Directors since 2019, was Chairman in 2023, and currently serves on the Nebraska Broadcasters Association board.





KANSAS BASKETBALL COACHES ASSOCIATION

2025 MEDIA OF THE YEAR AWARD

The 2025 Kansas Basketball Coaches Association Media of the Year Award recipient is Lane Gillespie, the Sports Director at Ad Astra Radio and the Voice of McPherson High School on 98.9/1540 KMCP.

Gillespie was born and raised in Topeka, graduating from Seaman High School in 2018. After high school, he attended the University of Kansas where he earned his Bachelor's in News & Information in 2022. While at KU, Gillespie announced KU Football & Basketball for the student radio station, 90.7 KJHK, and was hired by Kansas Athletics to be the Voice of Kansas Baseball for the Spring 2022 season.

After graduating from KU, Gillespie found work as a Multimedia Journalist at WIBW-TV in Topeka, working in news and sports. Gillespie worked in WIBW's weekly high school sports show Kansas Prep Zone, winning two awards from the Kansas Association of Broadcasters for best sportscast alongside the 13 Sports team.

Gillespie moved to McPherson in November 2023 to be the McPherson Sports Director at Ad Astra Radio, the Statewide leader in high school sports coverage. Alongside his Sports Director roles, Gillespie also took the role as the Voice of McPherson High School and McPherson College. While at McPherson, he has called two full basketball seasons which saw the MHS Boys Basketball team winning the 4A State Title in both seasons.

Ad Astra Radio covers high schools across the Golden Belt, South Central Kansas, and Southeast Kansas with 11 stations broadcasting from Hutchinson, McPherson, Larned, and Iola. Ad Astra Radio also covers McPherson College, Bethany College, Sterling College, and Allen Community College and are affiliates of the Chiefs, Royals, KU Jayhawks, and K-State Wildcats.



LANE GILLESPIE

**Sports Director – Ad Astra Radio
Voice of McPherson High School**



On December 4th, I was on my way to early morning practice for basketball when I hit black ice going up a hill and rolled my truck many times. On one of the rolls I was ejected out of the sunroof, I landed on the highway, breaking my clavicle, fractured my skull, broke most of the bones in my face and much more. This put me in the hospital for a week and half with the first week being in the ICU. I have no memory of my accident or much memory of my hospital stay. When I finally got home, I was very restricted. It felt like my whole world got taken away in the blink of an eye. I went from being very active in school, participating in many organizations and working almost everyday after practice to not being able to do anything and barely being able to move. Mentally it was challenging watching my basketball team playing without me when I so badly just wanted to be there with them. Watching my FFA chapter striving at all their events that I was supposed to go to but wasn't able to was heartbreaking. I went to three different types of therapy, twice a week; and it was frustrating because I couldn't do the everyday things that I was so used to doing. I went to endless appointments, all at least an hour away from home, just for some of my doctors to tell me that I was released and others tell me I would never see the court or the field again. Those were some of my hardest days - not because they didn't give me good news, because some of it was, but because they were the ones telling me that I would never again be capable of doing so many of the things I had always been so passionate about doing. Finally, around the middle to end of January, I got to go back to school. I was only able to go for two hours, but I was never more excited to walk into my high school in my life. I got to talk to many of my teachers and got some of the biggest and longest hugs that I needed more than I ever knew. I also attend school for five hours a day on the days I don't have physical therapy. The littlest things made the biggest impacts for me. As hard as this whole thing was and still is, I always remember that God works in mysterious ways. I know to never take a day for granted because you never know what the next day will bring. With the accident I was in, I've been told many times I'm lucky to be here and I don't doubt that a bit; but it makes you realize how good your life is even on the darkest of days. While I might not get to play the sport I'm so passionate about or work at the job that I love so much or even participate in my clubs that I've spent hours working on, I know that I'm still here for a reason and I can't wait to see what God has in store for me.

KBCA Student-Athlete
COURAGE AWARD



Don Jones Courage Award - 2025

Braden Kirkpatrick

Circle High School

A Season of Resilience: Overcoming Tragedy on the Basketball Court

My name is Braden Kirkpatrick, and I serve as one of the assistant basketball coaches and head baseball coach for the Circle Thunderbirds. The basketball season is typically a time of camaraderie, competition, and growth, but for me, it became a testament to resilience and the power of community. Through the heartbreaking loss of my beloved daughter, I was faced with one of the most challenging circumstances of my life. Yet, as I navigated my grief, I found strength and support in a place that I never would have expected: my basketball team. On February 17th, a tragic car accident changed our lives forever. My wife and I, blessed with two beautiful daughters, experienced an unimaginable loss when our oldest daughter was critically injured. After several harrowing days in the hospital, we faced the crushing reality that she gained her angel wings on February 20th. In those moments, time stood still, and the joy of family life was replaced by a profound sense of emptiness and despair. Returning to the basketball court was one of the hardest decisions I had to make. The Thunderbirds had been more than just a team to me; they were a family that had become intertwined with my own. They had always stood by me, offering support, respect, and trust. In my time of tragedy, I knew I had to return—not only for my own healing but also as a way to honor my daughter's spirit. The values of teamwork, dedication, and perseverance that I instilled in my players mirrored the way my family rallied together during sorrowful times. The initial days back on the court were tough. Each time I addressed the team, I felt the weight of my grief pressing down. However, I also felt the warmth emanating from my players. Their eyes were filled with compassion as they spoke to me, as though they understood that I was navigating through a fog of emotions. They were not just my players; they were my support system. Their unwavering dedication reminded me of the importance of community, and it gave me the strength to push through each practice and game, regardless of how heavy my heart felt. As the season progressed, I saw a transformation within myself. Coaching became a grounding force, a way to channel my sorrow into something meaningful. I rediscovered the joy of teaching, of watching young athletes grow and develop both on and off the court. I encouraged the players to take every challenge head-on, reminding them that resilience is built through hardship. In many ways, I was applying those same lessons to my own life. Every game we played became an opportunity for healing. I could feel my daughter's spirit within the energy of the gym; her laughter echoed in the memories of family trips to see all my daughters cheer for their dad. The importance of cherishing every moment was illuminated in my interactions with my team. They taught me that it was okay to lean on others and that vulnerability does not equate to weakness. Together, we pushed ourselves to overcome not just the physical challenges of the game, but the emotional ones as well. As I coached through a season marked by such profound loss, I realized that in every cheer from the stands, every high-five, and every team huddle, there was a small piece of healing taking place. We weren't just chasing victories; we were cultivating resilience together. The bonds formed during that season became transformative, not only for me but for the entire team. We learned to find strength in vulnerability and to cherish not just our moments on the court, but our connections with one another off the court as well. In the end, the Circle Thunderbirds taught me a valuable lesson: that even in the face of heart-wrenching challenges, there is power in community and support. While I will forever carry the pain of losing my daughter, the love and solidarity shared with my team allowed me to honor her memory in a unique and meaningful way. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to share my journey with such an incredible group of young athletes, who encouraged me to find hope and strength as we faced the season together. Through basketball, I discovered not just a path to healing but a deepened understanding of the impact of love, support, and resilience.



Don Jones Courage Award

2025



Rick Strecker
Hayden High School
Blue Valley West
Head Girls Basketball Coach

Rick Strecker grew up in Topeka, KS. He attended Topeka Hayden High School, where he played basketball and ran cross country and track. He was the Student Council President and named the Hayden Athlete of the Year during his senior year and was on the varsity cross country team that won the school's first KSHSAA State Championship under Coach Jim Casper. He played basketball for former All-American Darryl Jones at Benedictine College and was named a captain during his senior year. Strecker is a graduate of Benedictine College (BA Physics), the University of Missouri-Kansas City (MS Physics), and the University of Kansas (MSEd).

Strecker began teaching and coaching at Topeka Hayden High School in 1983. He taught Physics, Chemistry, and mathematics while also coaching cross country and track and field. He served as an assistant in the boys basketball program under legendary coach Ben Meseke for five years before being named as the Head Girls Basketball Coach in 1988. Coach Strecker and his teams went to the KSHSAA State Basketball Tournament 10 times during his 12 year run with the Wildcats, winning 3 State Championships while reaching the semifinals 6 times. Strecker and his wife, Kathy, directed powerhouse growth in the success of girls' athletics at Topeka Hayden, additionally winning 9 KSHSAA State Championships and 5 State Runner-up finishes in Cross Country and Track and Field. Strecker served Hayden as an assistant principal, athletic director, and was the President at Hayden for almost two decades. Coach Strecker was named in 2021 as an inaugural inductee of the Topeka Hayden High School Hall of Fame.

Strecker has most recently served as the Head Girls Basketball Coach at Blue Valley West High School while also teaching AP Physics 1 and 2. The Blue Valley West Basketball Jaguars have played a significant role in the powerful Eastern Kansas League, one the toughest girls' basketball conferences in the state of Kansas. Strecker holds the distinction as the career leader in varsity girls' basketball victories at both Topeka Hayden and Blue Valley West high schools.

He has previously been named the Kansas High School Girls Basketball Coach of the Year by the Wichita Eagle, the Topeka Capital Journal, the Kansas Coaches Association, and the Kansas Basketball Coaches Association. He coached in the KBCA State All-Star game on three occasions. He was the Region 8 Girls' Basketball Coach of the Year and a finalist for National Coach of the Year in 1996, as awarded by the NFHSCA. Strecker was named as both a Centennial League and Eastern Kansas League Coach of the Year and was recently awarded the Tom Colwell Lifetime Achievement Award by the Greater Kansas City Basketball Coaches Association.

Coach Strecker was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer during January of 2025. He continued to attend games and provided emotional and prayerful support to the BVW girls basketball team while initiating cancer treatments during the last three months of the season. The support he received from the players, their families, and the BVW community after the diagnosis is appreciated and amazing. He has been supported throughout his career and during his illness by his wife Kathy, children Jordan, Kristin and Seth, Shannon and Adam, Mary and Grace, and grandchildren Nora, Tori, Leah, Anthony and Matthew.



Clint Hill Service Award



Karl Brubaker

Karl Brubaker has found joy in sharing the inspirational side of sports in Goessel, Kansas, where he has written human interest “articles” since 2010. His focus is on team contributions, not statistics, and aims to highlight how sports events uplift everyone involved, from players to spectators. Inspired by helping his best friend Delbert Peters, a local sports writer, Brubaker began writing longer, detailed pieces about Goessel’s sports teams, which were often missing from the local news.

Originally from Harrisonburg, Virginia, Brubaker moved to Goessel in 1978 for work, and later married Marcia, a local music teacher. They raised three children, all of whom participated in Goessel sports and music programs. Brubaker has worked as a Controller at Hesston College since 1986.

His articles are typically written within an hour of each event, and shared with coaches for distribution on the school website and social media.

While not published in the local paper, Brubaker’s pieces capture highlights, unique occurrences, and moments that bring out the spirit of the game, ranging from 300 to 2500 words. Over 15 years, he’s written nearly half a million words, primarily covering volleyball and basketball, with occasional coverage of other sports and activities.



These stories, paired with photos from events, have helped keep the community engaged in Goessel’s school activities. Brubaker’s writing has been appreciated by parents, grandparents, and athletes, with many reaching out years later to reminisce about specific moments. His most cherished article was about Goessel’s 2015 Scholar’s Bowl state championship. One of the team’s captains recently reached out to thank him for the lasting impact of that write-up. Brubaker finds great satisfaction in knowing his articles continue to inspire others. His writings have and continue to be a cherished gift to Goessel students, families, and community.

