

An Iowa High School Athletic Association Press Release

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IHSAA Executive Director Rick Wulkow to Retire January 31

BOONE - One of the strongest athletic leaders in the nation, Rick Wulkow, the executive director of the Iowa High School Athletic Association for the past 10 years, is stepping down after 35 years of service to Iowa students and member schools.

In its monthly meeting held in Dubuque over the weekend, the Board of Control of the IHSAA accepted his formal resignation effective January 31, 2015. In the interim months he will work with the new executive director.

Tom Keating, Xavier, Cedar Rapids Principal and chairperson of the Board of Control, also announced that Alan Beste has been named as the new executive director. Beste joined the IHSAA staff in 1989 as a Wellness Coordinator and since July 1998 has been an Assistant/Associate Director.

Wulkow became the fourth executive director of the 109-year old Association when he accepted the leadership reins from Bernie Saggau, who served 37 years as executive director. It was Saggau who recruited him from the public school ranks in 1980 to join the IHSAA as an assistant executive director. He was appointed by the Board of Control to follow Saggau on January 1, 2005.

"I am proud to have had the opportunity to serve the IHSAA member schools and students for 35 years," he said. "I have never considered my career opportunities as work and I have been fortunate to interact and be part of programs that have been led by so many great people."

Wulkow indicated that education and education-based activities have been passions of his since his youth. "Throughout my lifetime, I have been blessed with many wonderful professional opportunities and any success I have experienced is a direct result of those who surround me," he said.

"My wife Barb, three daughters and their families have sacrificed and throughout have been my strongest supporters. Now is the time for me to give back to them what they have given me," he added.

Speaking for the Board of Control Keating remarked, "On behalf of the Board of Control, I want to express our deepest appreciation to Rick for his phenomenal leadership as Executive Director. He has led the IHSAA with vision, with passion and most importantly with the best interest of the young people of our great state. Rick has taught us that the best leader is a servant leader, one that walks with those he leads, not in front of them."

Continuing on, Keating added, "Rick's profound and positive impact on the activities programs in Iowa will endure long after his retirement. He enjoyed the way our young people competed for championships and performed on stage but more importantly, he valued the lessons learned and the relationships formed."

Keating praised Wulkow's management style leading in the way that all great leaders do by putting people first and striking a family chord with staff. "As a result of his never-ending commitment to improvement, he took an already strong and vibrant organization to unprecedented levels of opportunities for the students. His legacy will be revered," he added.

Concluding, Keating stated, "Thanks to Rick's leadership, Iowa led the way nationally, particularly in making the health and safety of our student-athletes a priority. No more is this evident than with the IHSAA's work on concussion management. Other states look to Iowa and to Rick's staff at the IHSAA for guidance on many important issues."

Wulkow's successful record of service to the IHSAA has been marked by being an articulate spokesperson and leader for education-based activities and sportsmanship. He is a strong advocate of Iowa school administrators, teachers, coaches and students. In 2011-12 he was President of the Board of Directors of the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) and previously served on their Strategic Planning Committee.

As an assistant director, he held prominent leadership positions on national rules committees for football and chaired the basketball committee, two of the sports he administered as an assistant

director of the IHSAA. He also administered track & field, tennis and swimming programs plus junior high activities, and officials' registration.

He worked extensively with administrators, coaches associations and advisory groups in crafting and implementing changes regarding safety in sports, sportsmanship and improvement of officiating. Additionally he has served the NFHS with a term on its records committee. He has earned NFHS Service and Contribution honors in basketball, football, and spirit.

In addition he served as President of the National Association of Sports Officials, whose largest membership contingent is high school officials.

A "back row" fan at state tournament competitions, of which he has not missed one in his tenure, Wulkow left the limelight to capable assistant directors that administered the activities. He has overseen an annual budget that has not impinged on the resources of the member schools in spite of increasing costs.

As with his two predecessors, he is straight-forward when responding to questions relative to high school activities issues, giving the rationale for IHSAA decisions, and explaining how the work of the Association ties in with its Mission and Goals. Moreover he demonstrated the ability to make with integrity the difficult and sometimes controversial decisions that often accompany his position.

Under Wulkow, IHSAA services to schools continued to be strengthened, the Hall of Pride expanded its venues and outreach to schools, and state tournament attendance increases in track and field, baseball and soccer helped underwrite non-revenue sports, which have seen an increase in participation.

On his watch, IHSAA programs for students, in spite of fewer schools, continued to strengthen and grow never falling below a national rank of 19th in a state that is 30th in population. A protocol for schools and coaches to deal with possible concussions and student-athlete safety in all sports continued to be a major focus throughout his tenure.

He shepherded the second expansion of the football playoffs, which began in 1972, moved the State Basketball and Wrestling Tournaments to the new Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines and the State Baseball Tournament to Principal Park also in Des Moines. A weight management system and the Dual Team Tournament format were implemented in wrestling. The IHSAA celebrated 100 years of State Tournaments in Track and Field and Basketball in his tenure as well as the first ever Coed Track & Field Championships. Bowling, another coed undertaking, was added to the list of competitions in 2010.

The popular Governor's Scholar Recognition started in 2003 continued to grow in the number of honored students and those attending. Technology and website changes, including a new logo, have been implemented to facilitate member schools, the media and public with "need to know information."

In addition, he has enjoined his staff and the Iowa Girls' High School; Athletic Union in hosting a cadre of new administrator workshops to assist principals and activities directors on how the two groups operate and to facilitate understanding of a variety of areas that impact them.

Wulkow is a native and graduate of Lytton High School, where he was an all around athlete. He received his undergraduate degree from Buena Vista University and his Masters' Degree in school administration from the University of South Dakota. While at Buena Vista, he earned the Jerry Ibach Award given for athletic and academic excellence. He was inducted into the Buena Vista University Hall-of-Fame in 1975.

He was a teacher and football, track and baseball coach at Radcliffe (1967-70) and Denison (1970-75), where he also was athletic director. He then was an assistant football coach at the University of South Dakota for two years before returning to high school administration, first as the principal at Paullina High School (1977-78) and Jefferson High School (1978-80).

Wulkow was a highly respected prep and collegiate basketball official for almost 30 years. He worked numerous high school state tournaments, 11 post-season collegiate tournaments, including five NCAA Division I appearances. He was also an interim commissioner and supervisor of officials for the Iowa Intercollegiate Conference and also served as an observer of football and basketball officials for the Big 12 Conference, as well as an officials' scout for the National Football League.

He has remained active in church and community affairs in Boone. He has served as the chairperson for the congregation of Trinity Lutheran Church, serves on the Board of the Boone Education Endowment Fund, the Iowa Sports Foundation Board of Directors, the Des Moines Area Sports Commission, and is a member of the Iowa Schoolmasters' Walt Whitman Club.

He and his wife Barbara of 47 years have raised three adult daughters — Sally (Dighton) of Boone, Wendy (Postel) of Polk City and Holly (Anderson) of Ankeny. The Wulkow's' are the proud grandparents of six grandsons and two granddaughters.

IHSAA Executive Directors

1906 – 1923	Board of Control with Board President George Marshall leading
1923 – 1941	George E. Brown (part time in 1923; full time in 1927)
1941 – 1967	Lyle T. Quinn
1967 – 2005	Bernie Saggau
2005 – 2015	Richard Wulkow
2015 –	Alan Beste

Alan Beste Named as New IHSAA Executive Director

Alan Beste, who has been on the IHSAA since 1989 and has served as an Assistant/Associate Director since 1998, has been chosen by the Board of Control to become the next IHSAA Executive Director.

Tom Keating, Xavier, Cedar Rapids Principal and chairperson of the Board of Control, announced Beste has been named as the new executive director, effective February 1, 2015.

The Sauk Centre, MN, native and graduate of St. Cloud State University and MS degree from Northwest Missouri State University came from to the association after serving Pleasant Valley Schools as a teacher and athletic trainer for seven years.

Speaking for the Board, Keating remarked, "Alan has developed an outstanding relationship with school administrators and those skills will serve him well as the Executive Director. We believe he has the vision to continue to develop the IHSAA as an organization that serves the young people of Iowa and provide them with incredible opportunities for participation in outstanding activities programs."

Continuing, he added, "He has served for two legendary leaders at the IHSAA and can draw on that phenomenal wealth of knowledge to guide him."

Commenting on his new position, Beste remarked, "I am excited the Board of Control has the confidence in me to be the next Executive Director. I am proud to have a great staff in place and I will do my best to follow two of the best leaders in the business – Bernie and Rick."

His record of service to the IHSAA member schools and the NFHS is well documented in administering the areas of student wellness, safety, swimming, tennis, sports medicine, coaches' education, and wrestling. His work in student wellness, particularly in concussion management is nationally renowned.

In his role as the Association's first Wellness Coordinator he appeared on nationally televised programs addressing wellness issues for high school students and student athlete safety. He has also been active in the day-to-day services of the IHSAA, assisting school administrators in a variety of areas.

He has served on NFHS national rules committees in wrestling, swimming and sports medicine advisory/coach's education. He has chaired the national rules committee on Swimming and Diving and currently chairs the national wrestling rules committee.

In addition he has headed the Association's Citizenship-Leadership poster program, now in its 24th year, as well as overseeing the growing Governor's Scholar Recognition Program.

In addition, he has assisted in the state competitions in football, basketball, soccer and baseball, coordinating athletic trainers and sports medicine personnel for those events

He and his wife, Donna, a teacher in the Boone Community Schools system, reside in Boone and have raised two adult children, Kyle and Megan.