

Adams-Friendship Educational Foundation

Academic Hall of Fame

*In Partnership with the
Adams-Friendship Alumni Association*

May 25, 2024



Gerald Brien
Distinguished Alumnus



Jeffrey Paul Cila
Distinguished Alumnus



Sherry Baumgart
Distinguished Alumnus



Adams-Friendship School District Academic Hall of Fame 2024

Each decade has its defining moments. Those who came of age in the 1970s are no exception. The end of the war in Viet Nam, Watergate, the resignation of Richard Nixon, the breakup of the Beatles, and the death of Rock 'n Roll King Elvis Presley were current events. For the generations that follow, what “was” is now a mere moment in history.

Those who graduated from Adams-Friendship High School during the 1970s were preparing to write their own history—beginning their unique journeys to bring their contributions to the world and pride to their community. The Adams-Friendship School District is proud to honor three of our own: Jerry Brien (1970), Jeffrey Cila (1977), and Sherry Baumgart (1978) with their 2024 induction to the A-F Academic Hall of Fame.

Gerald Brien (1970)

After graduating from Adams-Friendship High School in 1970, Gerald “Jerry” Brien continued his education at UW-Stevens Point earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Communicative Disorders in 1974 and followed with a Master of Science degree in 1976. He spent 35 years as a Speech and Language Pathologist for the Kaukauna School District. After retirement, he continued working with students as a substitute in this area.

Mr. Brien has earned distinction as a Kaukauna Area Special Education Teacher of the Year, a finalist for Wisconsin Teacher of the Year, and was awarded a Kohl Fellowship. Along with recognition for excellence in the classroom and program development, he has also been active in supporting athletics and was honored by the Wisconsin Athletic Association-District 4 as a supportive leader who assists in maintaining athletics as an integral part of a total educational program. His activities and acknowledgements extend to numerous community organizations—Liturgical, Service, Government, and Fine Arts.

Though Mr. Brien’s contributions to school and community are numerous, his love of family also runs deep. He and wife, Kathy, have been married for 49 years with three daughters, two grandsons, and two stepsons. In 1982, he donated a kidney to his brother, Jim, who was inducted into the A-F Academic Hall of Fame in 2022 and continues to do well. Jerry carries on as an advocate for organ donation. He shares his story and, with his brother, participates in many ways to promote organ donation.

In his own words, Mr. Brien credits Adams-Friendship Schools for preparing him to perform for life:

“I am very grateful to all the past teachers who had an influence in my overall education. I start with Mrs. McFarlin, my first-grade teacher, who began my love of learning. What is unique is that when I began my student teaching in Nekoosa, Mrs. McFarlin was ending her 40th and final year at the school. We carpooled together where she continued to enlighten me with her wisdom of education. I was never disappointed with any of my grade school teachers.

My high school teachers strived to mold me for my future, always encouraging my best work. There were several who molded me to what I am today. Mr. LaValle always promoted excellence in music for this tuba playing student. Mr. Hunt and Mr. Craig always took an interest in my well-being. Mrs. Ducharme promoted me as a speaker, which I have used several times in my years. Mr. Manning promoted my interest in paying attention to the world around me and teaching me to evaluate issues to make the right decisions, including writing a letter to the editor to encourage people to vote for a new school. There was a time when both my

mom and dad were in separate hospitals at the same time. My coaches, Mr. Waller and Mr. Kolek, made sure that I was OK and continued to keep my focus. I vowed that given the opportunity, I wanted to pay that support forward and get involved someday in helping others. Mr. Sardeson, the Superintendent, took me to a Father-Son banquet, as he had only daughters.

The last person I wanted to write about is my guidance counselor, Mr. Sullivan. I told him I wanted to be a sports announcer. He told me there was no future in that but encouraged me to look at a new program at UW-Stevens Point called Communicative Disorders. I am not sure if it was because he had a speech problem himself, but he thought I would be good with kids. I took his advice which led to my 35 years as a Speech and Language Pathologist where I was able to make a difference for hundreds of students I worked with. My only regret was to be able to tell Mr. Sullivan I started to announce at school events.

'Mr. Sullivan, there was a future in announcing as I have now begun my 45th year announcing high school events.' I guess we were both right.

The very first letter I sent out when looking for my first job was to the Adams-Friendship School District. If there was an opening, I would have accepted. Unfortunately, there was no opening, and Kaukauna offered me a job. Kaukauna, however, can thank Adams-Friendship for making me the person I am."

When a song from "your decade" plays in your background, you return for a moment to another time and place. *Bridge Over Troubled Water* (1970), written by Paul Simon, summarizes Mr. Brien's life of service.

*... "If you need a friend
I'm sailing right behind
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will ease your mind
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will ease your mind..."*

Jeffrey Cila (1977)

Moving through the decade, picture an Adams-Friendship High School senior accepting his diploma at the May 1977 Commencement. In just six months, lyrics from *Free Bird* performed by Lynyrd Skynyrd which peaked on billboard charts in January, would take on a meaning it would be hard for Jeffrey Cila to anticipate.

After enlisting in the Navy, Reverend Cila began training as a Surgical Technologist in Orlando, Florida. This was the beginning of a career journey which took him to California, Maryland, North Carolina, Italy, South Carolina, Rhode Island, Virginia, and Nevada. After just eight years of service, he was promoted to Chief Petty Officer and completed an associate degree by attending night school.

During his 22 years of active duty, Reverend Cila was selected for a commissioning program earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1990. He was commissioned as Ensign, Naval Intelligence Officer and attended Aviation Ground School in Pensacola and Navy Marine Intelligence Training in Virginia before joining a squadron. After retirement from the military in 1999, he taught high school in South Carolina for two years. He and his wife were busy raising three children as he returned to college—earning a Bachelor of Science in Information Management in 2002.

In 2002, Reverend Cila was hired by the University of South Carolina School of Medicine as a Systems and Network Manager where he remained for 15 years. In 2012, he completed a Master of Health Information Systems Degree program online through the University of Illinois, Chicago. He spent two years as a volunteer instructor at the University of South Carolina and two semesters as an online associate instructor for the University of Illinois-Chicago College of Applied Professional Sciences (Health Data Management). He continued this phase in his career with the Lexington Medical Center.

Jeffrey Cila's accomplishments have been recognized resulting in numerous accolades. In the past 10 years, civic and religious endeavors have been and are continuing to write the newest chapters of his journey. In 2023, Jeffrey Cila officially became Reverend Jeffrey Cila, a pastor licensed by the United Methodist Church South Carolina Conference. In his words, "I've embarked on a new career that affords me a way of giving back and helping others as the Adams-Friendship School District did for me."

Reverend Cila's daughter said, "My father would be the first to claim he was an average student at Adams-Friendship High School. He instilled the importance of education—a ladder you climb—where you get off is a key determinant of the quality of life you will lead."

Reverend Cila responded to how Adams-Friendship Schools prepared him for life:

"Without question the district schools proved to me that I Can Learn. That knowledge first requires basic understanding of the rudimentary concepts, and principles to apply and build upon year after year. I benefited from the structure of the district in the 1970s; to have elementary, junior high/middle schools, and a central high school campus. Children can be children and young adults can learn and grow socially in their own age-appropriate peer structures.

My educational experience began at Pineland Elementary School after my family moved to the Cottonville area from Hancock; I would be in fourth grade. But I had five brothers and sisters too, all eventually in school together. One of my enduring memories was putting up the American Flag practically every day with my new friend Greg Bakovka in fifth grade. The classrooms were orderly, and we knew the teachers were in charge. I remember to this day my fifth-grade teacher, Mrs. Kreigle, putting on my report card, "Jeffrey doesn't take criticism well."...she was honest and right; something I needed to work on in the years ahead. It was clear we were there to learn and the teachers to teach so that we might master the content, prepared to move on from grade to grade. Sometimes that only meant moving from one side of the classroom to the other (important just the same). Programs like 4-H and FFA were available (got me raising rabbits to show at the Fair). Also participated in a Soil and Water Conservation speaking program and won – I believe the prize was \$3, big money back then. Mr. Ivan Morrow was so excited to take several of us to a regional speaking contest. It expanded my appreciation for the sustainability of the natural world. My first hunter safety course (age 12) was held at Pineland Elementary. Even recess had purpose whether on playground equipment or organizing ourselves in teams for touch football and softball. Our teachers were there to supervise and provide instruction. We felt connected to the other regional elementary schools as well. The schools were allowed to compete in inter-school team sports like softball, which created some strong and healthy rivalries, but also got students around the district acquainted early on. In time smaller schools' students ultimately had to move to middle school in Friendship and later to high school; once rivals now became teammates and lifelong friends.

Middle school in Friendship was culturally different from Pineland Elementary School. That was a good thing, I learned to adapt to change. The subjects were harder, the extracurricular activities were more available (sports, art, music, and civic activities). Not just our academic pursuits, but I was able to start music lessons (percussion) in fifth grade with Clark Staehling that lead to being in the band. Recently on the internet the Class of 1977 shared an old poem about our high school band's grand adventure of fund raising and marching in four Mardi Gras parades in New Orleans (1974). I was a freshman at the time. The whole community and district were so proud to support Angelo LaValle and our marching band. The value of a

community working together made a dream come true. We sold and ate a lot of fruit to make that trip happen. I had forgotten the police and fire escort to the county line; going and returning.

High School had many teachers that were demanding, but they also were good at dispensing praise when we students were on task. I was an average student, taking advantage of band, sports, theater, and student government to learn the values of precision, how to treat people, and time management. I recall a group of fellow classmates sharing an early life goal on a trip to Madison. Mine was that one day, I would need their vote when running for public office. Twice I ran for the South Carolina State Representative for my district as the Republican Candidate. Student government motivated me to make good on trying to make peoples' lives better through public service. Over the years I've tried to keep tabs on Adams-Friendship when my Navy career permitted. From time to time the Navy would send a press release to the local paper to promote one of my career milestones. No doubt my parents, family, and friends liked to see that. The Class of 1977 remains close online and many of us return every five years for a reunion; some of the early ones I helped plan. In 2022, after accepting my pastoral appointment, unable to travel back, I gave the blessing for the meal by Zoom. My classmates appreciated the effort.

Our family was already large when we settled in Cottonville (six children) which meant ever-growing sets of social circles. As I grew older, it became clearer that in many cases our friends' parents had grown up together as well. Back then as children we learned that being interconnected was important. Through our parents and school, friends needed to know they could rely on one another. Then the joys were more spirited, and hardships would touch many. I lost two fellow students in my years in Adams-Friendship, so yes, the school district also helped me to grieve and work through loss. When in my early teens, my parents would divorce, and after a time Mom would marry a man who had five children. When I was a senior in high school one more child was born to tie the new blended family together perhaps. At the age of fourteen I would decrease the extracurricular aspects of school to work in the evenings and summer to take financial pressure off the family. Where, in the schools sweeping out Adams Elementary at the end of the day and in the summer repainting classrooms, scrubbing floors, and general maintenance in the high school. That gave me a glimpse of all the people, not just teachers and administration, that are needed to run a school system so we could just show up and learn. I remember Principal Kolek cutting me a break when I did something wrong; Dale Toltzman who made algebra fun; Mrs. Fredrickson and Emerson Craig whose lessons in typing made promotion in the Navy easier and opened computing as a career field; Angelo LaValle who challenged me to be better not just average; and Myrtle Sauer who drove my bus and carried my brothers and sisters safely to and from school even when we were not very gracious - just to name a few."

In his communication to the A-F Academic Hall of Fame Committee, Reverend Cila commented, *"I am honored to receive this recognition, it is truly meaningful to me. Though my professional life has taken me many places, Adams-Friendship is at the core of my being, the cornerstone of who I have become as a person. I enjoy every chance I get to return to that part of this country. I regard Adams County as my true home in this world."*

In July of 1977, Lynyrd Skynyrd performed in Oakland California. A few phrases from the song *Free Bird* feel poignant when reviewing the accomplishments of Reverend Jeffrey Paul Cila:

*... "If I leave here tomorrow
Would you still remember me?
For I must be traveling on now
'Cause there's too many places I've got to see"...*

Yes, Reverend Cila. You remember Adams-Friendship and Adams-Friendship will remember you.

Sherry Baumgart (1978)

How long does it take to be considered a native in a rural community? For Sherry Baumgart, becoming an Adams-Friendship native began at the age of three when her father, Otto, became an eighth-grade teacher and

coach at Adams-Friendship Elementary School in 1963. Later in that decade, her mother Joyce, began her 30-year career teaching K-8 in multiple Adams-Friendship Schools. Both were the first-generation college graduates in their families—an accomplishment achieved by attending classes toward their degrees during the summers and at night—all while raising their own family. As Sherry commented, *“Getting a secondary education was never a question in my household.”*

Half day kindergarten at Adams Elementary was Dr. Baumgart’s first experience at school. Though kindergarten was *“just fine,”* moving into a full day in first grade—even with her dad teaching in the building was not her cup of tea! *“I did not want to come in from recess. He (my dad) would call my mom. She came to get me to go back into the school. I see the humor now but not back then!”*

Being strong-willed and knowing what you want in life is useful as an adult, but another matter when you’re six! Dr. Baumgart never had either parent as a teacher and remarked, *“It was definitely planned that way.”*

“Both my parents were my mentors and my tutors. Oh, how I would cry turning that page in the math book to a story problem. I had to work hard for my grades and did put in a lot of late nights doing homework. I’m very grateful that my parents were there to guide me academically. They made sure I took challenging classes to prepare me for any secondary education such as Algebra and Chemistry. I so enjoyed Biology and Human Biology. Animal Science opened a world I had not known. Home Economics taught me my sewing skills. Mr. Manning’s class opened my eyes to current events and public speaking. I never had a teacher that did not want to help me if I needed it. I played volleyball and basketball. Those sports taught me teamwork.

I graduated from Adams-Friendship in 1978. I attended one year at UW-LaCrosse then received my Associate Degree with honors and Respiratory Therapy at Mid-state Technical College- Marshfield in 1981.

In 1981, I moved to Illinois to work at MacNeal Hospital in Berwyn for three years. I came back to Wisconsin and worked as a Registered Respiratory Therapist at Saint Joseph’s Hospital in Marshfield. I really enjoyed working with the heart surgeons and weaning their patients off the ventilator after surgery.

In 1986, I received a call from my previous boss in Illinois telling me about a new adventure—that MacNeal Hospital was merging with Rush Hospital and Suburban Hospital to open a groundbreaking Ventilator Care Center in Hinsdale. I moved back to Illinois to be the lead Respiratory Care Practitioner. It was a new concept in taking in long term ventilator patients from other hospitals and bringing them to this new facility with the goal of getting them off the ventilator. I got to work with the German and California companies that made the ventilators we were using. Our concept was a team approach for those unique patients. Not only did we provide nursing and respiratory care, we also provided nutritional, mental, and physical therapies. We were becoming successful in getting long-term patients off the ventilators. The Ventilator Center is now known as RML Specialty Hospital and is a national leader in ventilator weaning.”

The example of life-long learning and Dr. Baumgart’s strong will and determination served her well when she made the decision to return to school and pursue a degree in chiropractic. She obtained her prerequisites and entered the National College in Lombard, Illinois now known as the National University of Health Sciences. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Human Biology and Doctor of Chiropractic degrees. Dr. Baumgart received accolades in the fields of Nutritional Counseling, Dissection of the Human Body, Theoretical and Practical Clinical Laboratory Diagnosis, X-ray and Spinography, and Physiotherapy.

In 1995, there was no question, Dr. Baumgart had achieved the status of Adams-Friendship native when she returned home and opened her own chiropractic office. She is highly regarded for her professionalism and her

integrated approach to health. *“It has been rewarding to be home and helping patients with their discomfort and pain. I also spend a lot of time explaining to them any concerns of health insurance and breaking down the language in their lab and imaging reports so they understand them better. We go over vitamins and nutrition which I also am licensed in. We discuss lifestyle changes as well.”*

When you open the local newspaper, you may see an ad stating *Baumgart Chiropractic is where patients are treated like family*. No statement could be more accurate. In April of 2020, she received an award from the Adams County Veterans Service Commission for her help saving the life of an elderly veteran neighbor who, without her acknowledging his circumstances, would not have survived. He is now a resident of an assisted living facility, and she visits often with his favorite treats.

The importance of education instilled by her parents has not been lost in her time back home. She served on the Adams-Friendship Board of Education for 15 years. *“I really love mentoring my high school age patients on secondary education whether that be going to college, tech or trade schools or even opening a business. I am very proud that some of the Adams-Friendship students went on and got their degrees in Respiratory Therapy and Chiropractic. I hope to be a role model for Adams-Friendship for my academic achievements-especially for our young women. Work hard, follow your dreams, take your education seriously, stay focused, and believe in yourself no matter the obstacles.”* Dr. Baumgart continues her community service as an Election Day inspector for the city of Adams.

When a nomination for the Academic Hall of Fame begins with the sentence *“I’m asking that my friend, Sherry Baumgart, be considered for the alumnus Hall of Fame”* ... when the person making the request is both a friend and employee, you know you have someone special.

A song you might remember from a situation comedy in the 1980s, ***The Golden Girls***, was actually written in 1978. The title of this pop hit by Andrew Golden summarizes the Adams-Friendship community’s feelings for this “native” daughter—Dr. Sherry Baumgart.

*“...Thank you for being a friend
Traveled down the road and back again
Your heart is true, you're a pal and a confidant
I'm not ashamed to say
I hope it always will stay this way
My hat is off, won't you stand up and take a bow?
And if you threw a party
Invited everyone you knew
You would see, the biggest gift would be from me
And the card attached would say
Thank you for being a friend...”*

These graduates of the seventies brought and continue to bring immense pride to the Adams-Friendship School District and community. The Adams-Friendship School District Academic Hall of Fame partnering with the A-F Alumni Association are honored to “sing their praises” with their 2024 induction.

Adams-Friendship Academic Hall of Fame

<p>2016 Honorees Distinguished Alumni <i>Tania Bonnett, J.D.</i> (1997) <i>Neda Esmaili, M.D.</i> (1997) Legacy <i>Richard and Verla Lysy</i> (1947 and 1948)</p>	<p>2017 Honorees Distinguished Alumni <i>Rebecca Grabarski, B.S.</i> (1993) <i>David Janssen, M.D.</i> (1977) Distinguished Educator <i>Richard Colby</i> (1960) Legacy <i>Martin and Carole Janssen</i></p>	<p>2018 Honorees Distinguished Alumni <i>Tanya Kotlowski, B.S./M.S.</i> (1990) <i>Kathleen Theisen B.S./M.M.</i> (1986) Distinguished Educator <i>Clark Staehling</i></p>
<p>2019 Honorees Distinguished Alumni <i>Audra Hovorka Mead,</i> <i>B.S./M.B.A.</i> (1988) <i>Robert Warren, B.S./B.A.</i> (1981) Distinguished Educator <i>Linda Webster Machan</i> Legacy <i>Harvey Wagner (1956)</i></p>	<p>2020 Honorees Legacy <i>Charles and Alice Parr</i> (1957)</p>	<p>2021 Honorees Distinguished Alumni <i>Alexis Pheiffer Bhatheja,</i> <i>B.A./J.D.</i> (1995) <i>Lisa Ann Robinson Massen,</i> <i>M.S. (2002)</i> Distinguished Educator <i>Sandra Swisher-Pheiffer</i></p>
<p>2022 Honorees Distinguished Alumni <i>James Brien, B.S.</i> (1965) <i>Richard Pease, B.S.</i> (1980) <i>Kevin Beaver, B.A./M.S.</i> (1989) Distinguished Educator <i>Robert Beaver</i></p>	<p>2023 Honorees Distinguished Alumni <i>Darlene Hovorka</i> (1962) <i>Raymond Hintz, PLS, Ph.D</i> (1974) <i>William Janssen, B.A., M.S.</i> (1980) Distinguished Educator <i>Robert Garnett</i></p>	<p>2024 Honorees Distinguished Alumni <i>Gerald Brien, B.S./M.S.</i> (1970) <i>Jeffrey Cila, B.A./B.S./M.S.H.I.</i> (1977) <i>Sherry Baumgart, M.S./D.C.</i> (1978)</p>

Accepting Nominations for 2025

Visit [Adams-Friendship Area Education Foundation - Academic Hall of Fame \(afedfoundation.org\)](https://afedfoundation.org)

for more information or email

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