

May 2020

USA SOFTBALL OF MICHIGAN



of Michigan

Blues Across Michigan Newsletter



USA Softball of Michigan Blues Across Michigan wants to recognize multiple USA Softball Umpires from the USA Softball of Michigan program every month for their accomplishments on the field in the local area, state or national championships as well as how they have given back to the game off the field.

Being recognized does not always relate to the number of national or state championships an umpire has participated in. This honor encompasses an umpire's accomplishments, both on and off the field, in their local area and district in addition to their contributions at the state or national level.

These umpires represent what being a member of the USA Softball of Michigan umpire family is all about and bring attention to the widespread and diverse umpire community in our program across the state.

For May we are honoring some individuals that have umpired in our program, and from the officiating world. These are individuals that have recently passed away; they have made positive impacts and will be missed.





Art Serafinski, his wife, Cathy, and daughters Rachel and Kristen

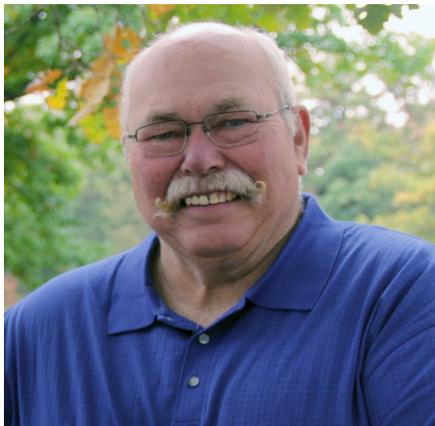


On April 20th, the USA Softball of Michigan program lost a giant, Art Serafinski to COVID-19. Art was always willing to do whatever was necessary to help this great program. Whether on or off the field, Art was always the first to step forward to take care of whatever was needed. It didn't matter what the task was, Art was ready to step in. I was involved with Art on numerous occasions at tournaments from JO to Slow Pitch. It was always a sense of relief when I was a UIC and had Art as a tournament director or umpire. In one case, Art was the tournament director in Midland for a JO tournament. We had two umpires that were no show for the first game of the day. I told Art of the situation and said I was going on one field to help out and without hesitation, Art asked if I wanted him to take the other field. Art had no experience as a Fast Pitch umpire but was willing to help out on the bases until help arrived. Art worked part of the game until an umpire came to relieve him. Stepping up to help out and doing what was needed, that was Art.

Darrin Duistermars, Executive Director, summed up Art's presence in our program this way, "What made Art so special was not just his talent on and off the field...it was his attitude. He got things done in the best ways, possible. He embodied the spirit of our great game and displayed the dedication, commitment, work ethic and heart that it took to be one of the greats of softball in Michigan. He distinguished himself as a leader in the service of USA Softball of Michigan. Few people have been involved with USA Softball of Michigan in so many different capacities and even fewer have distinguished themselves in each of those roles like Art has done."

A few years ago, we had a chance to send a couple of umpires to North Dakota for a National Championship. Art jumped at the chance to take that 16-hour ride, one way, with no mileage allowance. Being Art, he was all in. He had such a great time that he made another trip for the McQuade, the biggest slow pitch tournament in the country the following year. His experiences were something he always cherished. He was going to go back in 2019 for one more time but due to health reasons, he had to decline the offer. The North Dakota UIC Mike Wolf was disappointed in not having Art come back. When hearing of Art's passing, Mike sent a note, saying Art was one of the nicest guys he had ever met. I believe Gary Evans summed it up, "Art was a big man with a heart larger than life."

A brother to all, Art will be missed so much by our great organization, but through all the people he touched, he has made all of us better. Rest in peace, our friend.



Terry Coburn, District 2

Terry was an ASA umpire...predominately in fast pitch, and worked several JO tournaments for us. He also worked the local men's fast pitch leagues in Vicksburg, Coldwater, and Rice Creek.

While "semi-active" with ASA, Terry was very active with the local little league organizations and their youth FP programs as an umpire and umpire organizer. Terry was on the Vicksburg Little League board and volunteered for 43 years.

He was a well-known and respected varsity MHSAA umpire in the Southwest corner of Michigan for a long time, and had several upper level tournaments, including a state championship assignment.

From Ron Welch, "I know that in these situations everyone always says nice things, but I'm going to tell you...I do not know anybody who was not a big Terry Coburn fan. This included players, managers and other umpires. He was a BIG guy, with a BIG heart, who loved softball in general and umpiring specifically. I could go on..."

It was sad, even though Terry's size created health issues, to see him pass. He also worked, and retired early from Kalamazoo Valley Community College. Because of his physical issues, it had been a while since he had been on the field."

Terry was the huge man with the big handlebar moustache that always made a point to be at the MHSAA Softball State Finals. Usually finding a way to help out or talking to the evaluators about the game and umpires. Being around this tournament always brought a huge smile to his face.

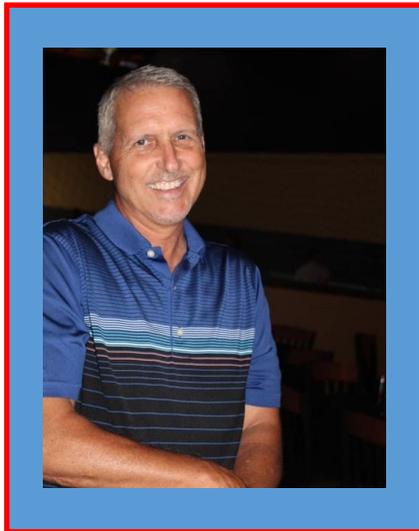
USA SOFTBALL™ of Michigan

Vern was a registered umpire in the District 11 area for many years.

Vern worked for Lansing Fire Department for 27 years, holding the positions of: firefighter, EMT, second driver, dispatcher and administrative assistant. Vern umpired in his spare time in the Lansing slow pitch leagues. Vern was a very business-like individual who enjoyed being around cars and softball.



Vern Counseller, District 11



Kerry Lehman

Kerry Lehman, a 62-year-old Jackson resident spent 16 years as a sports official in the area and quickly became a favorite amongst coaches, fans, and players. During a March 11th boys district basketball tournament, Lehman and fellow officials came down with an illness which was believed to have been a head cold or sinus infection. All men tested positive for COVID-19 and were treated at Henry Ford Allegiance Health. The other officials made a full recovery, but Lehman entered a month-long battle with the virus. Kerry passed away on April 22nd.

Lehman's personality helped him establish a rapport with all the area coaches and many former players still remember him for his kindness on the job.

Jackson Northwest Basketball Coach said about Kerry, "What I loved about him being an official was that I knew he was there to help the kids and support them in a way that made the games better. Every time he walked into the gym, you knew the game was going to have high-quality officiating and you could trust that there was going to be good communication between

Rest in peace, Art, Terry, Vern, and Kerry.