



GRINDSTONE AWARD



2022

Dennis Kushlak

Dennis Kushlak was born in Berea in 1942. He feels blessed by God to be able to have reached his 80th birthday, golden wedding anniversary and now the grindstone award in the same calendar year. Though not thinking himself worthy of this award he sincerely appreciates those who have made this tribute possible. Berea was, and still is, a special community to him. Though he spent many years in Brunswick he spent considerable time helping his mother in Berea and volunteering his time to Berea activities. Looking back, he remembers the Kiwanis Club establishing the Little League program in 1952 and then the Rotary Club creating the class "F" baseball program. Then came the American Legion sponsoring his class "E" Baesel post 91 team. "Over the last 70 years there have been hundreds, probably thousands, of civic minded people who have contributed to the volunteer fabric of this town. I see it now through following the activities of eight of our seventeen grandchildren who reside in Berea and Brook Park."

Dennis graduated from Berea high in 1959. He played football, basketball, and baseball and was all conference in each sport. He accepted a football scholarship to Iowa State University. Though he left the football program in his junior year, he remained close to his athletic interests becoming the president of the ISU Interfraternity Athletic Council. He also took another leadership position becoming the president of his chapter of the Alpha Tau Omega fraternity.

Eight years into his career as a high school mathematics teacher and coach of football and basketball, he was courted by Miss Mary Bell of Seven Hills while he was teaching at Parma Normandy High School. They were married at Saint Adalbert's parish in Berea and began a long career of service to their parish. As their

family grew to five children; Katie, Maggie, David, Sarah, and Colleen, in their first ten years of marriage they helped develop various church programs. They helped young couples and young families in pre-cana, baptismal, and parish picnic programs. In later years Dennis also helped create a Bereavement Program. When they adopted Brian, their sixth child, Dennis had retired from high school coaching, and he became his sons CYO basketball coach. For many years Dennis sat on the church parish council, serving as president for four years. He was voted by the Southwestern Parish Conclave to sit on Bishop Pilla's Diocesan Parish Council representing this area's parishes. He has been a lector since the program's inception and takes pride in proclaiming the word of God at mass. Currently he is working on St. Adalbert's Sesquicentennial Celebration (1873 – 2023) Committee and recently presented a PowerPoint lecture on the church's history.

Dennis has served Berea High School graduates as a member of the Berea High Alumni Association. He was there for every All-Class reunion working behind the scenes. He also gave reunion tours of the old High School building. As a past-president of the association he continues to work on the Tree of Knowledge Restoration Campaign and is Co-chairmen of the Alumni Scholarship Golf Outing. Now that Berea high has been razed, Dennis switched his focus to the Berea Historical Society. Over the years Dennis was a leader of the Lolly the Trolley tours at the July 4th Ice Cream Social with the Mahler Museum and created the last 10 society calendars. Now he has become the president of the society. Dennis says, "I have had a wonderful opportunity to work with the great Bereans in both the Association and the Society. They all are just as passionate about this town as I am."

"Involvement is its own reward", states Dennis and, "none of this would be possible without my very understanding wife", Dennis recalls an old TV show called "I Led Three Lives" and that is what it is like for him and Mary at their "villa" on Riverside Drive.