

2026 HALL OF FAME IHSSA INDUCTEE



LE COX Vinton-Shellsburg

Growing up as the daughter of educators, Le Cox always knew she wanted to be a teacher. She loved school, correcting worksheets for her mother's elementary teacher friends, hanging out with her dad at basketball practice, shelving books in the library at school for her mother, even being at school early and leaving after the rest of the students. And while she didn't know about speech until she was in high school, she did become accustomed to the time and energy needed to be a speech coach.

In high school first in Scranton and then at HLV, Le participated in speech and theatre. She did everything from Solo Mime (complete with makeup) to After Dinner Speaking to covered in glitter portraying "Glinda, the Good Witch of the North". At Iowa State, she continued in theatre, in Cabaret, and as the assistant executive director for Stars Over Veishea for two years. Still she never really thought she would be a speech coach.

Le received her BS in English. Her first job was in the small southeast district of Morning Sun, where she taught every language arts class and directed the plays. After two years, she moved to Vinton where the district was just starting a sharing agreement with Shellsburg. This job included coaching speech with another new teacher, Eric Upmeyer! And so began the partnership that would last until she retired 34 years later.

Le and Eric hosted numerous speech contests including WaMaC Conference Contests, District Large Group and Individuals as well as State Individual Contest. Le was also a member of the IE All-State Committee and the Judge Certification Committee. In addition, she was honored to be an officer in the Southeast District. While retired, Le continues to be involved in school, currently serving on the Vinton-Shellsburg School Board, subbing in all the schools, working every home volleyball and basketball game, and, of course, judging speech. Le feels deeply honored and humbled to be inducted into the IHSSA Hall of Fame.



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ERIC UPMEYER Vinton-Shellsburg



It is noted that environment often shapes an individual's path in life. That is certainly true with Eric Upmeyer. One of his earliest memories was being escorted, in a rather physical tow by his mom's hand, into a large gymnasium to watch his older sister Anne perform the role of "Nellie" in South Pacific. He also remembers a similar occurrence watching his older brother Bob perform in the same gymnasium. Eric also recalls his mom setting up the dining room for Bob's storytelling event. The piano stool was carefully placed in front, and the chairs set up to form the audience. And it began! It was magical! The amazement was just beginning!

Eric began his college career as a math education major at UNI. Taking the general education course in fine arts, "Oral Interpretation of Poetry", was the perfect fit. He had participated in that event in high school. Still taking calculus, chemistry and computer programming classes, Eric learned from an instructor about the speech team. "Cool," he thought and quickly joined that winter. He became a certified judge for the IHSSA in the fall of 1986. The constant pull of the fine arts contributed to a historic and life-changing decision. The decision came on a February night of Eric's second year as a math major. Disillusioned with the finite world of math, he learned that the foreign film "Z" was being shown. He recognized the title from a record his sister had left at home and to which he listened to many times. In the ending credits of that movie, he realized his true passion was for the story, literature, and the human condition. Eric changed his major the next morning.

Eric began his teaching career at Vinton-Shellsburg High School in the fall of 1989, meeting head speech coach Le Cox for the first time. Together, they hosted multiple speech contests over the years including WaMaC Conference Contests, District Large Group and Individual, and State Individual Contests. Both have presented at the IHSSA coaches' conventions over the years. Eric jumped into the debate world with Public Forum Debate in 2004 and served two terms on the IHSSA State Debate Committee. He continues coaching and assisting Vinton-Shellsburg's new speech coaches. Eric feels very humbled beyond belief with the honor of being inducted into the IHSSA Hall of Fame!

**Le and Eric will be honored at a reception and banquet
Friday evening during the IHSSA Coaches Convention.**

