



## Celebrating 50 Years of Title IX

### **50 For 50:**

#### ***KSHSAA to Honor the 50th Year of Title IX***

By Harold Bechard

The late Janell Smith-Carson of Fredonia was arguably the greatest high school female track and field athlete Kansas has ever produced.

But, Smith never won a medal at the Kansas State High School Activities Association's state track and field meet in Wichita. In fact, she never competed in the state meet at all despite still owning the all-time state record of 52.3 seconds in the 400-meter dash and one of the best marks ever - nearly 20 feet - in the girls' long jump.

Janelle Smith was simply a young lady ahead of her time in the 1960s. She qualified for the 1964 Olympic Games as a teenager; set several Junior Olympic national records; was a two-time AAU national champion in the 400, competed in the 1963 Pan American Games in Brazil and was featured on the cover of Sports Illustrated in 1965.

Smith, who passed away from cancer in 2020, raced and competed all over the world, but was never on a girls' high school team in Fredonia or a women's college team at Emporia State Teacher's College.

She didn't have the opportunities that many take for granted these days.

"What I missed the most was not having other girls to run with and not being on a team," said Smith-Carson to the Parsons Sun in a 2009 story as she was being inducted into the Kansas Sports Hall of Fame. "The girls now have so many more opportunities."

These days, girls in Kansas have 12 high school sports to choose from each year - basketball (1973), bowling (2005), cross country (1977), golf (1973), gymnastics (1974), soccer (1993), softball (1976), swimming and diving (1975), tennis (1970), track and field (1972), volleyball (1971) and wrestling (2020).

They can thank Title IX for that.



*Janell Smith-Carson-KSHSAA  
Hall of Fame Class 1975.*

Starting June 23, the KSHSAA began its celebration of the 50th year of Title IX, when Congress proclaimed that "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

Next week, the first of 50 stories highlighting female administrators, coaches and athletes who left their mark both on and off the playing field will be featured on the KSHSAA website.



*Charlotte Davis. Long time administrator in the KCKPS.*

50 stories in 50 weeks, celebrating the 50th year of Title IX - from Jackie Stiles and Lorraine Davidson to Kendra Wecker and Lynette Woodard, from Jim Baker and Terry English to Kim Tennal and Joan Wells.

"Kansas has a rich history of outstanding student-athletes who have represented member schools, and we have really enjoyed looking back at the history of Title IX, knowing that many laid the foundation for the success girls experience and the opportunities they have today to participate at the highest level," KSHSAA executive director Bill Faflick said.

Faflick said both women and men blazed the trail to allow that to happen, administrators like Cheryl Gleason, Fran Martin, Charlotte Davis, Tamie Preston and Jacque Feist, just to name a few.

"There are so many who have been impactful to activities and they have done so as administrators and they have done so as athletes to overcome some barriers that have been in place that we have worked hard to remove," Faflick said.

Faflick is a self-proclaimed "proud graduate" of Southeast High School in Wichita and was a member of the Golden Buffaloes cross country team when Stephanie Chippeaux became the first girl to ever participate in cross country.

"It was great to have Stephanie as part of our team," Faflick said. "I was fortunate to have been part of programs where we didn't look at students based upon their gender or ethnicity," he said. "We looked at students as students and tried very hard to provide opportunities for all students, regardless of gender, regardless of race, regardless of social-economic status."

Cheryl Gleason, who will retire from the KSHSAA on Thursday after spending 32 years with the organization, graduated from Columbus High School in 1972, one month before Title IX was enacted.

Gleason, an assistant executive director, coached and taught at Caldwell and Osawatomie prior to coming to the KSHSAA in 1989 and has served as administrator for gymnastics, volleyball, bowling, tennis, swimming/diving and golf while also serving as liaison for the KSHSAA Hall of Fame and serving as director for the Kansas Association for Youth program.

Gleason remembers being part of the GAA - Girls Athletic Association - in high school.

**"We had what they called play days," she said. "I know it sounds hokey, but I remember going to Pittsburg State for a play day where girls from different counties in southeast Kansas would come together. It was almost like an intramural day."**

**Gleason said she took Physical Education all four years in high school because, "that was my sports." She took up the sport of tennis as a freshman and ended up competing in the 1970 and '71 state tournaments, finishing third in singles her senior year.**

**"As I look back, I think, "Gosh darn it, I wish I hadn't graduated when I did," she said. "But, at the same time, because of what I experienced, that propelled my career path. I told people at my retirement yesterday that I wanted to give girls something that I never had, and that was the opportunity to participate in sports, the opportunity to see the benefits of it.**

**"There are just a lot of special stories out there and picking 50 had to be a tough task."**

**Faflick said the staff at KSHSAA has been talking about the Title IX project for nearly a year and wanted to do something special to honor the 50th year of girls getting the same opportunities as the boys. The National Federation of High Schools will also be celebrating the milestone.**

**A group of eight to 10 current and former Kansas journalists will be writing the weekly stories.**

**"I am thrilled we have outstanding journalists from across the state of Kansas who are willing and available to help tell this story, because this is a story that needs to be told," Faflick said. "We're pleased to be able to put that spotlight on girls where it should have been all along. We can't undo that moment of history, but what we can do now is move forward and recognize and honor those who we have benefitted from their work.**

**"This is a year where our focus will be celebrating the success of those girls who have been true trailblazers in our state of Kansas. This is impactful in every town in Kansas. It's a story certainly worth telling."**

*We are grateful to partner with WIN for KC, an organization with the mission to empower the lives of girls and women by advocating and promoting the lifetime value of sports through opportunities for participation and leadership development. WIN for KC and the KSHSAA believe involvement in activities and sports lay the ground work for supporting well-rounded citizens in our communities and beyond. For more on WIN for KC visit: <https://www.sportkc.org/win-for-kc>*