

# Barnstable's leading character receives salute

## Arts Foundation award for BHS' John Sullivan

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Who will play drama coach John Sullivan when they make the movie of his life?

It's not on the studio schedule yet, but just check out the Web site of the Barnstable High School Drama Club for a list of students this man has taught over 28 years, students who are now established in the film and stage industries, and you can bet that one day they just might decide to immortalize this joyful, energetic, popular teacher.

At its recent Creative Collaborative Conference in Hyannis, the Arts Foundation of Cape Cod gave John Sullivan its award for Community Leadership in Support of the Arts, and he has been praised by his students and lauded by community groups many times over.

Sullivan was inducted into the National Teachers Hall of Fame in 2004. In 2008, Barnstable Town Manager John Klimm honored him for making a difference in the community, saying "this teacher has tugged and pushed and led and poked thousands of our youth in his extraordinary career. Some of them have made it all the way to Hollywood and Broadway and others have gained the self-confidence and self-respect that have helped them for a lifetime in Barnstable."

But Sullivan doesn't like to take credit for his students' accomplishments. "I'm just a cheerleader," he said. "I'm in the memory business. Just here to encourage kids to perform, to have a good time, to have an experience they will always remember. I want them to have a chance to shine."

Sullivan's productions take place on the largest high school stage in New England. A big stage demands big productions and he creates shows that rival the most professional.

The drama club's re-

cent *Wizard of Oz* had a cast of 325 and used 400 costumes, all made by the students and their parents. Sullivan is always looking for the "Wow" factor. For the *Wizard* he created it by covering a white horse with green paint. He said that the audience's reaction when the horse walked on stage made it worth all the trouble.

You do not doubt it when Sullivan says, "My job is fun. Gets me up in the morning. I still have 200 sick days due. I'm never out." The amazing thing is that being drama coach is not his "job." He volunteers for this. His regular job is as an art teacher at the school.

Sullivan is not ready to retire, but if they make the movie of his life, will it be another *Good-bye Mr. Chips*? Although he thinks most movies about teachers are too sappy, this endearing 1939 recollection of the life of a well-loved teacher is still his favorite.

Maybe Jason Pacella, president of the Drama Club, will help write the story. He says of Sullivan, "I love everything he has ever



RORY T. MARCUS PHOTO  
**BEAMING**—John Sullivan has cause to smile after winning an award for community leadership in support of the arts from the Arts Foundation of Cape Cod.

taught me. I'll be able to use it the rest of my life. When I started, all I wanted to do was work backstage and then one day I found myself out front playing Scrooge. He pushes us to our limits, but it's always for us."