

LHS Coach Julie Work once stated, "Because of women like Laura Shestina, who said, 'Why not?', girls for the past fifty years don't know what it's like to not have the opportunities afforded to them, whether it is in sport, academia or the workforce. Thanks to the women who participated before us, we have the ability to create change and inspire people and continue to say, 'why not.'" As a pioneer in women's high school sports, Laura Shestina's legacy is not widely known, but that does not make it any less vital.



Like many Lakewood kids in the 1960'S and 1970's, Laura played on one of Lakewood's George Usher sponsored softball teams. Laura was such a standout that when she was sixteen, Lakewood Sporting Goods asked her to play on their adult women's softball team.



Laura participated on LHS' volleyball and basketball teams. She was a starter on the volleyball team but it was in basketball that she really shone bright. The girls' volleyball and basketball teams were not part of the Lake Erie League (LEL) program until the 1974-1975 school year. As a senior, Laura was part of both first interscholastic squads at LHS.



By all accounts, when Laura hit the gym floor, "She was in it to win it." During the 1973 - 1974 season, when Laura was a junior, she impressed by leading Lakewood's attack, often being the high scorer and/or getting the most rebounds. Laura only continued to rise in her senior season, which she shared with her younger sister, Jo Ann, a standout on the freshman team. As a senior, Laura was BOTH high scorer AND high rebounder in nearly EVERY game. Laura's crowning achievement during that season was her fifty-point scoring record and twenty-three rebounds in the game against Rocky River in March 1975. Laura led the LHS ladies as they went on to finish third in the regional post-season invitational sponsored by the Cleveland Board of Women's Officials for teams that were Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) members and had won half of their season's games. Unfortunately, that's where it ended because the OHSAA-sanctioned girls' state tournament did not commence until after she graduated. Laura's spectacular play as a senior raised the LHS girls' varsity team to 8-0 for the regular season and 11-1 overall.



Post-graduation, Laura found her career with New York Life Insurance in downtown Lakewood. She started at the bottom and worked her way to manager over the years. She was offered a vice president position but after thirty-five years of service, declined the promotion and retired in 2012.



Although Laura purchased a home in the West Park neighborhood as an adult, it was a mere 3 blocks from her childhood home in Lakewood. She maintained her tight connection to her family as well as to the Lakewood Community for her entire life, whether at work, playing on adult softball leagues or visiting a local tavern with friends. Laura passed away at age 64 in 2021.