

Hall & Dickson Receive Basketball Hall of Fame Landmark Award



(left to right) Shari Barnhart, wife of Dickson; Lea Dickson; Barbara Hall; Michelle Katz, partner of Hall, at the banquet in Hamden, Connecticut, after accepting the Landmark Award, presented by the Connecticut Women's Basketball Hall of Fame. Photo: Sue Gillis

Vermont Woman congratulates Barbara Hall of Stratford, Connecticut, and Lea E. Dickson of Gouverneur, New York, upon receiving the 2018 Connecticut Women's Basketball Hall of Fame Landmark Award on April 18, 2018. In 1974, Hall and Dickson sued the Stratford Board of Education to end gender discrimination in the public school system in Connecticut—two years after the passage of Title IX, which was supposed to end gender discrimination for girls and women athletes but continued to be unenforced.

Hall and Dickson, both untenured teachers in the Stratford school system, were girls' basketball coaches: Hall at Stratford High School and Dickson at Bunnell High School in Stratford. After failing to persuade the board of education and the school administrations to provide equitable programs, facilities, uniforms, and equipment for female athletes and coaches, they courageously decided to risk their professional careers and filed a lawsuit against the Stratford schools, spurred by their belief in the life-changing power of Title IX.

Equal opportunity, working conditions, and treatment in athletics were under siege, and those in power fought the requirements of Title IX every inch of the way. Four long years later, their lawsuit—Dickson and Hall vs. the Stratford Board of Education—was finally settled. It was a major win for them and for every girl and woman in Connecticut. In 1978, the US District Court mandated, by law, the “equal terms and conditions of employment for coaches of girls' and boys' sports, including but not limited to provision of uniforms, use of facilities, scheduling, use of equipment, allocation of monies and support services.” The result was immediate implementation of Title IX in every state in the country, which still stands today.

No one else in the country had the guts to sue. Barbara Hall and Lea Dickson did. And thanks to them, Title IX was finally enforced. Girls' and women's participation in sports was changed forever.

And it started with Barbara and Lea. Forty years later, they are finally honored. We congratulate them, with love and gratitude and recognition long overdue. □
