

## Szostak family dedicates new scoreboard in standout athlete's name



RYAN HUTTON/staff photo A new scoreboard looks over the lower turf field by Nicholson Stadium at Methuen High School on Monday. It is dedicated to the memory of Methuen Hall of Famer Kathy Szostak.

METHUEN — A group of about 50 people gathered on Nicholson Stadium's lower field Monday afternoon to dedicate a new scoreboard recently installed in memory of Kathy Szostak, a high school sports standout and a graduate of the Class of 1979.

The Szostaks — a family "synonymous with Methuen High School athletics," according to Athletic Director Matthew Curran — donated the scoreboard with help of the community, especially the Methuen Athletic Improvement Committee.

When the committee pushed for the renovation of Nicholson Stadium and secured the second turf field, now referred to as the "lower field," it was without a scoreboard. The Szostaks worked with the MAIC to secure the funding to make it a reality.

"They really were the guiding force behind getting it done, obviously through the funding; but also having Kathy Szostak's name up there, a graduate of Methuen High, is something that will leave a legacy for her family in her honor," Curran said.

Kathy Szostak was a stellar athlete in field hockey, basketball and softball while at Methuen High. She was named the most valuable player in all three sports, broke school records, and was the first Merrimack Valley Conference athlete — male or female — to secure a full athletic scholarship to college. While she was offered scholarships from Ohio State University to play either field hockey or softball, she opted for field hockey.

"Whatever she touched in sports, she was phenomenal at, basically," recalled Szostak's sister, Nancy Szostak Wright.

Szostak died of brain cancer at 32, seven years after she was first diagnosed. She and her mother, Peggy, are now both memorialized — Kathy through the scoreboard and her mother, known as "Ma," through a stone bench at the school, also dedicated on Monday.

"It took over two years to pull it together and everything, but it was all worth it," Szostak Wright said.

Fittingly, the scoreboard now looms over the turf field that hosts many of Methuen's field hockey games — the sport that put Szostak through college at Ohio State.

Aiding in the Szostaks endeavor to erect the scoreboard were the Methuen Athletic Improvement Committee, its founder Steve Saba and board member Mike McDonnell, former Methuen coach Mimi Hyde, her son Russell Stott, and Curran. State Rep. Linda Dean Campbell, Mayor Stephen Zanni and Superintendent Judith Scannell were among the family, friends and coaches who gathered on the field for the event.

The Szostak family has also seen four inductees into the Methuen High School Athletic Hall of Fame and awarded 39 scholarships in Kathy's name over 22 years, totaling \$23,500.



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