

BY: Senator GRIFFO

CONGRATULATING the 2016 inductees of the Rome Sports Hall of Fame and Museum

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to honor those individuals whose exceptional athletic prowess leaves an enduring legacy in their communities; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to congratulate the 2016 inductees of the Rome Sports Hall of Fame and Museum which was celebrated at its 40th Annual Induction and Awards Dinner on Sunday, July 31, 2016, at the Beeches Inn and Conference Center, Rome, New York; and

WHEREAS, The six distinguished 2016 inductees include: Joseph A. Abone, Allison Coccia, Tony Franco, Jim Korpela, Robert D. Manfred and Al Williams; and

WHEREAS, Joseph A. Abone is the third family member to be inducted into the Hall of Fame, joining his father, Tony Sr., who was inducted in 2006, as well as his brother, Tony Jr., who was inducted in 2013; all of whom made remarkable contributions to the sport of baseball; and

WHEREAS, After an outstanding playing career at Rome Free Academy High School (RFA) and as a member of the Smith Post American Legion team, Joseph A. Abone went on to star at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York; the right-hander pitched the Dolphins to the NCAA Division II World Series twice and still ranks among the school's all-time pitching leaders in wins and strikeouts; he was also selected to represent the United States in the 1978 Pan American Games; and

WHEREAS, After graduating from Le Moyne, Joseph A. Abone signed a pro baseball contract with the Montreal Expos after being drafted in the eighth round; he worked his way up to the Triple A level in Memphis, Tennessee, and was on track for the big leagues until a torn rotator cuff early in the 1983 season ended his playing career; and

WHEREAS, For more than 30 years, Joseph A. Abone has lived and worked in Memphis, and currently, he is the pitching coach at Christian Brothers University where his son, Ryan, is a senior on the baseball team; and

WHEREAS, Allison Coccia was a three-sport letter winner at Rome Free Academy (RFA); she excelled in field hockey and basketball, yet surpassed others in track and field; and

WHEREAS, Both as Captain of the basketball and track and field teams, Allison Coccia was honored in 1984 as RFA's outstanding female athlete in her senior year; she set the school record of 5 feet, 6 inches in the high jump which still stands today; she is a former school

record holder in the 100 meter and 400 meter hurdles events, and broke the 100 hurdles mark set by her older sister, Mary Jo; and

WHEREAS, One of only a few select athletes from across New York State chosen to compete in the International Sports Exchange in Cologne, West Germany, Allison Coccia returned with a win in the high jump; and

WHEREAS, Tony Franco was a well-rounded athlete at Rome Free Academy who excelled in track and field and football, although his best sport in high school may have been wrestling; and

WHEREAS, At 5-feet-3-inches tall, Tony Franco was Captain for the Black Knights wrestling team and won two sectional championships on the wrestling mat; he also was a record-setting broad jumper and a two-way football player; and

WHEREAS, After his 1959 high school graduation, Tony Franco was drafted into the United States Army and later joined the Air Force where he embarked on a long career as a computer programmer; and

WHEREAS, Tony Franco helped found and build the Rome Hawks PeeWee wrestling program, and worked with special needs youngsters; and

WHEREAS, In the city of Rome, New York, Jim Korpela has made an impact as a player, coach and organizer in recreation sports; and

WHEREAS, Born in Rome while his father was stationed at Griffiss Air Force Base, Jim Korpela enjoyed a successful sports career at Rome Free Academy as the leading scorer for the boys soccer team in his junior and senior years, breaking Perry Nizzi's single-season scoring record with 23 goals; he also played hockey and baseball for the Black Knights; and

WHEREAS, In his adult years, Jim Korpela became a member of the Professional Bowling Association and is a member of the Rome Bowling Hall of Fame; he is also an accomplished golfer; and

WHEREAS, In team sports, Jim Korpela spent more than a dozen years as a player and manager for the Copper City Chiefs hockey team, and also found success in softball, playing on several state championship teams and serving as president of the Rome Men's Softball Association; and

WHEREAS, Over the years, Jim Korpela served as a member of several tournament committees, including softball and golf, and recently was appointed Director of Parks and Recreation for the city of Rome; and

WHEREAS, Robert D. Manfred is being inducted in the "contributor" category of the Hall of Fame after being involved in youth sports for more than 30 years where he coached thousands of youngsters in the Fran Allison basketball and Little League baseball programs; and

WHEREAS, Born in Albany, New York, Robert D. Manfred's family moved first to Massena, New York, and then to Potsdam, New York, where he graduated from high school lettering in tennis, football and basketball; he attended Clarkson University where he eventually became coach of the tennis team in his senior year and earned a Bachelor of Science degree

in Chemical Engineering; and

WHEREAS, After graduating from college, Robert D. Manfred proudly served as a member of the United States Army and was sent to Korea with the Army Corps of Engineers; and

WHEREAS, Following his discharge in 1955, Robert D. Manfred married Canastota native, Phyllis Aquino, and was hired by Revere Copper Products, putting in motion what would be a long connection to Rome; he soon became active in the Fran Allison and Little League programs; and

WHEREAS, Over the course of nearly 40 years, Robert D. Manfred was a volunteer coach and served as the official scorekeeper for the Rome Free Academy basketball program for many seasons; he also found continued success in tennis as both an instructor and player, winning city championships in singles and doubles; and

WHEREAS, For more than four decades as a player, coach and Board Member, Al Williams has left his mark on the city of Rome through the sport of hockey; and

WHEREAS, Al Williams' father, Al Williams Sr., was an all-around athlete at Rome Free Academy (RFA) and played on the school's first hockey team in the early 1940s; he taught his son how to skate at an early age and helped instill in him a love for the sport of hockey; and

WHEREAS, Al Williams was a hockey standout at RFA before he continued his playing days at New Hampton Prep and then the State University of New York at Oswego; he returned to RFA and embarked on a coaching career of more than 20 years; along with fellow Hall of Famer, Dick Meiss, he led the Black Knights to two state championships and 10 sectional crowns; and

WHEREAS, Sports competition instills the values of teamwork, pride and accomplishment, and the 2016 inductees of the Rome Sports Hall of Fame have clearly made a contribution to the spirit of excellence which is a tradition of the Rome community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to congratulate the 2016 inductees of the Rome Sports Hall of Fame and Museum; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the aforementioned honorees.