

**MARK SILLS, PRESIDENT OF THE DELAWARE AFRO-AMERICAN SPORTS HALL OF FAME**

Sills, a Wilmington native who resides in Kenton with his wife and son, is the seventh president in the 21-year history of the Delaware Afro-American Sports Hall of Fame. He attended Glasgow High School, Morehouse College and Delaware State University. Sills, a standout basketball player, was inducted into the hall in 2014. The class of 2019 inductees will be honored April 20 at the annual banquet at the Modern Maturity Center in Dover. Sills is excited to continue to raise the hall's profile and expand its reach.

**DT:** What is the Afro-American Sports Hall of Fame all about?

**MS:** It was founded in 1996 and had its first induction in 1999. Founders included Howard Toliver, Nathan "Doc" Hill, the Rev. Conrad Riley Jr. and Harry Scott. The group was committed to recognizing outstanding, Delaware-born athletes that included high school, college and professional athletes, coaches and sports professionals, regardless of race. Four inductees from each county are chosen each year. We've had 182 inductees before this year's class.

**DT:** You also run your own business—Urban Youth Inc. That has to keep you busy.

**MS:** I have been running basketball tournaments in the tri-state area since 1997. I have tournaments for girls and boys in all age groups. That's the cool thing about being your own boss—you can make your own hours. I volunteer for a lot of community oriented programs. I



serve on the Delaware Basketball Hall of Fame committee and the sports broadcasters committee. I work closely with the Howard High School Alumni Association and I also work closely with the city of Wilmington Parks and Recreation department.

**DT:** What are your goals as president?

**MS:** One of my goals is to increase our membership. To make the organization even bigger we should do some workshops or maybe some mixers to get people to join. I would also like to start inducting historical teams in all sports. I see us increasing the number of women who are considered and inducted into the hall of fame. We are also trying to find a home for the hall. We need to expand our giving to reach more student recipients and further grow our scholarship funds so we can help more students realize their dreams.

**DT:** You mentioned that you're proud of the scholarship aspect of the organization.

**MS:** Yes. We have given out \$105,000 in scholarships since 1996. No other sports hall of fame in Delaware does this. Scholarships are awarded to selected senior athletes who are entering colleges and universities. And AAU and Junior Olympics athletes have been assisted financially at national competitions.

**DT:** Who were your mentors?

**MS:** My mentors include Maurice Pritchett, who was also a member of our hall; Ted Blount; Major Hairston—he's in the hall for being a baseball star at Delaware State. There's Richard Johnson, Gilbert Jackson, Mike Miller and Kenneth Hynson. Of course, another mentor is my father (James Sills Jr., the first black mayor of Wilmington). A lot of people have had a hand in my success.

—Drew Ostroski