

James N. Westman
Class of 1979



James N. Westman, a graduate of the Class of 1979, ran year-round for four years in cross-country, indoor track and outdoor track, lettering in all three during his junior and senior years and setting several school records. He was the recipient of the Robert D. Chipp Memorial Award for Athletics and Citizenship. He accepted a track scholarship to Rutgers University, where he set numerous individual and team records, became an NCAA Division 1 Champion, was named the recipient of the Donald Leslie Coursen Award as Rutgers' Outstanding Senior Male Athlete in 1984, and earned a Bachelor's degree. Afterwards, James earned his M.S. in Special and Elementary Education at SUNYA and his certification in Physical Education from SUNY Cortland.

Track records are meant to be broken, so when a runner can say his times still stand years later, it is a rarity. James N. Westman is rare indeed. According to the Columbia All Sports Club, James still holds CHS outdoor records for the 440 yard (**50.3**) and 880 yard (**1:54.0**) and the indoor 660 record of **1:13.4**. A four-time Metropolitan Champion in the 800 meters during his college years, James set the Empire State Games record in 1981 in the same event; amazingly, it still stands. Yet these examples are only part of the story for James, who was a Suburban Council and Section 2 champion; in the latter, he set records in the indoor 600 yard run, the outdoor 880 yard run and 800 meter run. He also ran the leg of a record mile relay team. 1979 was a milestone year: *Track and Field News* ranked James with the 9th fastest time in the nation for the indoor 600 yard run; he placed third in that event during the NYS High School Championships. In the outdoor 800 meter run, James finished second in the state. As a senior at the Eastern States Invitational held in New Jersey, he placed 4th in the 600 yard run, closing out his indoor season by posting the best time of the year, a Section 2 record, for a NYS runner.

At Rutgers, James enjoyed a remarkable career, and his list of records and achievements would take up pages. What follows are several choice highlights. In addition to becoming a 1981 NCAA Champion and receiving All American Honors as the anchor for the university's indoor NCAA Championship Two-Mile Relay Team, he posted the fifth-fastest indoor 800 meter time in the nation. 1981 alone was an incredible year: Track Athletic Congress Northeast Regional Champion in the 800 meter, 6th place in the National Sports Festival, a semi-finalist finish in the 800 meters at the Track Athletic Congress Nationals, and numerous national rankings as a member of the Rutgers 4X 800 meter and distance medley relay teams. In 1982, James and his relay teammates ranked highly in the nation in indoor and outdoor seasons. James *remains* the Rutgers school record holder for the indoor 1000 meter run, which he set while winning the 1983 IC4A Championships-- an athletic legacy in the truest sense.

After Rutgers, James set his sights on teaching and serving his community; in both areas, he has been superlative, just like during his athletic career. James has worked for 29 years in the Greater Johnstown School District, having taught special education and elementary education students throughout the district and serving as an instructional technology specialist for the past eight years. In 2004, he was named the New York State Lottery's Educator of the Week by WNYT (News Channel 13). Meanwhile, James has served as an assistant fire chief and EMT with the Town of Glen Fire Department, a Montgomery County fire investigator, a hazardous material technician, and NYS fire instructor. In 2009, James was named the Town of Glen's Firefighter of the Year; he also received honorable mention as a Montgomery County firefighter. James has been an assistant coach at Fonda-Fultonville in two seasons for running; for several years, he served as a NYS track official, too. He serves as a deacon and elder at the Reformed Church of Canajoharie, where he is a member.

James and his wife of twenty-four years, Betsy, reside in the Town of Glen; they have two sons, James and Daniel, who were runners at Fonda-Fultonville and later at SUNY Alfred and SUNY Oneonta, respectively. James is honored to have graduated from Columbia High School and Rutgers University, and proud to have represented both schools with distinction as a student-athlete who was dedicated to supporting his teammates in every meet.