

## **VHSL FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 28, 2021

### **Former VHSL Assistant Director for Academic Activities Leaves Lasting Legacy**

**CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va.** – Former VHSL Assistant Director for Academic Activities Bob Button, one of the nation’s most revered high school journalism teachers, died of pneumonia at Martha Jefferson Hospital Charlottesville, December 23, 2021. Mr. Button had a lung infection related to steroid treatment for a skin condition later diagnosed as lymphoma. He was 81.

“Bob Button made substantial and lasting contributions to high school journalism as a teacher and had a meaningful impact on VHSL academic activities that continue to this day,” said VHSL Executive Director Dr. John W. “Billy” Haun, Ed.D. “His life’s work has changed the world of high school journalism. It continues through his contributions to the activity programs provided by VHSL member schools, by his colleagues across the country, and by his former students.”

“I know of only a handful of people who’ve given as much as quietly, selflessly and graciously to our profession as Bob Button,” said Bobby Hawthorne, former director of academics for the Texas University Interscholastic League [UIL]

Mr. Button spent 11 years (1994-2005) as an advocate for students an assistant director of activities for the Virginia High School League (VHSL). His creative and innovative approaches to VHSL programs led to restructuring the forensics program and moving the League into electronic communication.

His efforts also led to creating the Scholastic Bowl, adding new events to the Debate competition, and making the VHSL/VCU Publications partnerships for advanced accredited journalistic training. In addition, Mr. Button pioneered the VHSL Journalism Summit and directed the VHSL Championship Journalism Workshop. He also organized the summer High School Editors Workshop.

A greatly loved teacher, Mr. Button taught journalism, English, speech, and acting at Grosse Pointe South High School in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, between 1966 and 1994. He counted among his former students a Pulitzer Prize winner, distinguished journalists from leading newspapers, including the New York Times and Washington Post, and other major media news organizations.

He was named the Dow Jones Newspapers Fund National High School Journalism Teacher of the Year in 1988. In addition, Mr. Button received numerous honors, including induction into the National Scholastic Journalism Hall of Fame and the Virginia High School League Hall of Fame. He was the first teacher elected to the Michigan Journalism Hall of Fame. Even in retirement, Mr. Button served as a judge for competitions in journalism and forensics.

A memorial service will be held on January 2 at 3 p.m. at The Gibson Theater at Live Arts in Charlottesville, Virginia. The Button family will post Livestream information on his [Teague Funeral Home obituary](#). His daughter, Button Wright, plans to share details on her Twitter account [@kbuttonw](#) as they unfold.

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