When Thomas “Tinker” Blake passed away on June 30, 2017 at the age of 60 after a long battle with multiple systems atrophy, the city of West Haven lost one of its finest community members.

 “Tinker was my go-to guy for so many years,” West Haven athletic director Jon Capone said. “He helped in so many ways behind the scenes to make the athletic department run smooth. Many times I would run things by him before making a final decision. He always had great advice. However, what I will remember most about him was his loyalty and commitment to his family and community.”

Blake, also known as the “Voice of West Haven,” for many of the school’s athletic events, started having issues in May of 2012. After going through months of tests, Blake was diagnosed with MSA in November of 2013. He fought valiantly and was in good spirits up until the end of his life.

Blake was a former coach and board member for the West Haven Youth Hockey Association, as well as the president of the West Haven High School Penalty Box Club. He was also former vice president and coach of the West Haven Little League, former board director and chairman for the Jimmy Fund and West Haven Twilight League, co-chairman of the Savin Rock Festival and founder and past president of the West Haven Football Alumni Association.

While he was a long-time employee of SNET and AT&T (1979-2008), and the executive assistant to the Mayor of West Haven (2012-2013), he will be most fondly remembered for his tireless work in the community.

“Some people you just call great guys,” long-time radio personality George DeMaio, a friend of Blake’s for close to six decades, said. “That would be Tinker Blake. He loved West Haven and he was all about West Haven. He would do anything for you. He was one of the truly great guys, and he was one of the nicest guys you will ever meet.”

In a ceremony in May of 2016 prior to a softball game against Hamden, the press box of West Haven’s Frank Biondi Field was named in Blake’s honor. The softball team went on to defeat Hamden that night with the Blake family in attendance to qualify for the postseason.

“To have my name included at the complex with the names Frank Fitzgerald, Ken Strong, Whitey Piurek, Frank Biondi and Joe McHugh is a great thrill,” a touched Blake said at the time. “They are all great Westie icons. This is something I would have never imagined. It is a huge honor. I am totally humbled by it.”

Blake, who also served as a coach in the West Haven Girls Basketball League and West Haven Pop Warner football, along with being an assistant football coach at West Haven High, and assistant softball coach at Albertus Magnus College, was also on the West Haven Hall of Fame committee.

Blake was recently nominated to be inducted into the West Haven Hall of Fame this coming November.“He was just a great guy,” long-time friend and West Haven’s Recreation Program Director Tom Conroy said of Blake. “He is a great Westie. Obviously, him and (wife) Maureen go hand in hand. They are all about West Haven, especially with the kids. He was just a great guy. He would do anything for you.”

A 1974 graduate of West Haven, Blake received numerous awards throughout his decorated career, including the Connecticut Sports Writers Alliance Good Sport Award, the West Haven High School PTA Unsung Hero, West Haven Twilight League Community Service Award, West Haven Twilight League Program Book Award, Jimmy Fund Award, and the West Haven Football Alumni Association Edward L. Bennett Award for Community Service. Blake was also part of the New Haven Gridiron Club Hall of Fame.

Blake leaves behind his wife of 37 years, Maureen, their three children, Kevin, Erin, and Brittany, son-in-law Mike Bova, and grandson, Blake.

Tinker is survived by a loving family, including his wife, Maureen Smullen Blake, three children, Kevin Blake, Erin Blake, Brittany (Michael) Bova, his grandson Blake Bova,