

Staack a winner in legal, civic arenas

By PAT KINNEY

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WATERLOO — A prominent local attorney with a long history of community and professional success had died.

Tom Staack, a partner in the Dutton Braun Staack Hellman & Iversen law firm in Waterloo, died Monday after a short battle with aggressive pancreatic cancer, according to friends and colleagues. He was 65.

"He was recognized by his peers as one of the very best trial lawyers in the state of Iowa," said law partner Dave Dutton. "He pursued justice with determination that was quite amazing to watch and be a part of. And he pursued his community affairs with the same passion, the same commitment."

A standout athlete at West High School and the Univer-

sity of Iowa, Staack carried his passion for sports into civic duties as a longtime board member and chairman of the Waterloo Recreation & Arts Commission.



Tom
Staack

Under his chairmanship, the commission won voter approval of a \$1.3 million bond referendum to rebuild swimming pools at the Byrnes and Gates parks in 1980 and secured funding for construction of the Junior Art Gallery — now the Waterloo Center for the Arts — in 1982. He also was on the commission when the Young family, of Waterloo, made the principal gift for the construction of Young Arena, which opened in 1994.

Three decades ago, Staack was one of the early and leading proponents for a city sports complex — a project community leaders are pursuing today with the Cedar Valley Sportsplex.

"We've proven that if you set a goal, have a dream, that something can be accomplished," Staack said in a 1995 Courier interview.

He was "very community minded and got stuff done," local developer Rick Young said.

In the legal arena, Staack and attorney Chad Swanson of the Dutton firm represented many clergy sex abuse victims in legal actions against the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Dubuque. The archdiocese paid out more than \$12.3 million to 47 victims over the three settlements from 2006-08 plus counseling and a public archdiocesan apology to

victims.

"He gave the victims their voice and gave them a chance at healing," said Steve Theisen of Hudson, of the Iowa chapter of the Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests.

In 2010, as president-elect of the Iowa Association for Justice, a state attorney's group, Staack spoke out against a campaign by former gubernatorial candidate Bob Vander Plaats to oust three Iowa Supreme Court justices after a 2009 high court ruling legalizing gay marriage in Iowa. He cautioned such campaigns threatened to jeopardize the state's merit-retention system for judges.

"We're missing him like the Old Capitol (in Iowa City) would be without the gold dome," Dutton said.

Services for Staack are 10:30 a.m. Friday at Immanuel Lutheran Church.