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Calnan, Clingan and Huckaby draw big crowd for evening of Bristol sports stories and memories

TOPICS: Bristol Sports Hall Of Fame Philanthropy Sports



ESPN analyst and former professional basketball player Malcolm Huckaby, former UConn basketball star and current Portland Trailblazer Donovan Clingan and successful businessman and philanthropist Jay Calnan hold the audience's attention at the Bristol

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HOSTED BY: DAVID FORSTER MAY 19, 2025

David Fortier |

“Bristol people remember their roots” might have been the theme of Tuesday evening’s Bristol Sports Hall of Fame event featuring highly successful businessman and philanthropist Jay Calnan, former UConn basketball star and current NBA Portland Trailblazer Donovan Clingan and former NBA player and ESPN analyst Malcolm Huckaby.

“It’s not about the trophies. It’s about the character. It’s about the relationships, and it’s about the blessings that we have playing team sports, and we are blessed,” Jay Calnan said in his 40-minute address, pointing to his desire to leave as a legacy the foundation for others to share in the same experience.

“The life lessons through sports are immeasurable,” Calnan added, “and I honestly don’t think there’s any community that offers it more than Bristol.”

The program, “Seeking Success & Leaving a Legacy: An Evening with Sports & Business Icons,” drew over 250 people to DoubleTree by Hilton. More student athletes would have attended, but their games had been rescheduled from rainouts earlier in the month.



Video summary of the Bristol Sports Hall of Fame program, featuring Donovan Clingan, Jay Calnan and Malcolm Huckaby. | Tom Mazzarella

Specially, Calnan named three of life lessons he learned from sports:

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Former Mayor Ellen Zoppo-Sassu announces record fundraising effort



JULY 11, 2025
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DOING GOOD



JULY 3, 2025

194 students

“the concept of being a team player, a locker room person, and creating relationships, and the relationships are the more important aspects.”

Calnan shared how he has relied on these skill sets throughout his life, from getting into Tufts to starting his own business and co-founding his nonprofit, TEAM Impact. He runs JC&A, one of Boston’s most successful construction firms. TEAM Impact matches children with challenges and college sports teams.

In a step-by-step recollection, Calnan shared the specifics of how members of the Bristol community rallied to help him secure the financial support needed to get into and complete his undergraduate education at Tufts.

He played football at Bristol Eastern High School under then-coach Dave Mills. His senior year he received a scholarship to attend Tufts, but his family could not afford tuition.

Time and time again, Bristol people came to assistance, including one instance when he received a phone call from a Bristol banker who asked Calnan if he could do him a favor and accept \$1,000 from an overfunded account.

“I’m driving around one day (years later in Boston) and it hits me,” Calnan said. “Wait, what? Overfunded the account, like these guys are math guys. This guy runs a bank. He didn’t want to embarrass me, and he wanted to make it as easy as possible to say, ‘I know you need help. Here’s an extra \$1,000.’”



Jay Calnan addresses the audience at the “Seeking Success & Leaving a Legacy” program on Tuesday, May 13. | David Fortier

to carry on legacies of local residents

A majority of this year’s Main Street Community Foundation scholarships, totaling \$360,000, were awarded at this year’s Scholarship Reception at the DoubleTree by Hilton on...

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American Clock & Watch Museum among attractions open statewide for CT Open House Day, June 14, 2025



JUNE 10, 2025

BBGC's 'Reach for the stars' celebrates Bristol youth while looking to club's future

so well in the classroom. However, after that he did figure things out, he said, and graduated.

He peppered his talk with the names of coaches—Mills, LeBeau, Kilby—and businesses that supported sports leagues, such as Midget Football and Little League Baseball teams—Max’s Pizza, Bristol Savings Bank and Roberts Jewelers. He called out one team member Reinhard Walker at one point recalling how he, Calnan, looked up to Walker.

“I played behind Reinhard (at Bristol Eastern) and looked up to him—great athlete. But not only that, he was a great person. Followship skills is something that is incredibly important to youth as they go through sports,” Calnan said.

A significant theme that ran through his address was that of developing mutually beneficial relationships, which is a critical concept of the culture he created at his business and has led to his giving back to Bristol in the form of a gift of \$250,000 to the Bristol Sports Hall of Fame to help other young Bristolites.

“Bristol was my community and started the relationship by providing me with incredible life lessons and opportunities that I don’t think a lot of other people had,” he said.

“There are a lot oi relationships out there,” he said. “There’s good relationships, bad relationships, toxic relationships, but a healthy relationship has to be mutually beneficial...and it starts with what am I bringing to the relationship, because it you’re not bringing anything to the relationship, it’s not going to be mutually beneficial, and it won’t be healthy.”

He reiterated time and time again that Bristol, being his community, “through sports and other support systems that were here when I was a kid, provided me with that part of the relationship, and this is just me giving it back, so it’s a healthy relationship.”

His nonprofit was initiated out of another sports experience, having to do with his brother, who because of a medical condition, was not able to participate directly. However, he did have an experience as the bat boy for the Bristol Red Sox that provided Calnan with the inspiration for TEAM Impact, which matches children who are challenged in some way with college sports programs that lead to life changing experiences for both the teams and the individuals.

Clingan shared his Bristol snorts experience as well as some anecdotes

ARTS & CULTURE



JULY 11, 2025

Pokémon GO celebrates 9th anniversary with surprises, speculation and shadowy new arrivals

By Drew Harriott | July 11, 2025 | It’s been nine years since Pokémon GO first took the world by storm—and Niantic is celebrating in...

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Rockwell concert postponed until Wednesday night, July 9



JULY 5, 2025

Arts & Culture Commission aims to

“I’m not going to be as good as him,” Clingan said, as he began his comments, nodding toward Calnan, “I’m just going to talk a little bit about my story and how I got to where I am at today.”

He discussed losing his mother to cancer and facing the decision of giving up or trying to make her proud through basketball, something they both had in common. His mom was a standout in high school and college.

Clingan talked about his relationship with UConn basketball coach Dan Hurley.

“A funny story about Coach Hurley,” Clingan said. “When he first recruited me, the first time he ever came to watch me play. I’ll never forget. It was like 6 p.m. during the week at Bristol Central. Coach Hurley walked in. Coach Hurley is not always on time. So he walked in a little late. he was in there for about, probably no more than 10 minutes, and just walked out of the gym. When I saw him walk out of the gym, I was like, ‘All right, well, he just hated everything he saw.’”



Donovan Clingan calls out member of the audience at the Bristol Sports Hall of Fame evening program. Jay Calnan, another featured speaker appears in the background. | David Fortier

That is not how the story ended, because the rest is history. Hurley called Clingan’s coach and offered Clingan a scholarship. His coach called the Clingan household to relay the information.

Clingan, after deciding on basketball, admitted that during high school and March Madness he wasn’t always focused on schoolwork.

painted traffic boxes. S
budget cuts.



JULY 5, 2025
Photo of the week:
Birge Pond

LOCAL GOVERNMENT



JULY 11, 2025
Former Mayor Ellen Zoppo-Sassu announces record fundraising effort

Democrat Ellen Zoppo-Sassu’s campaign submitted its quarterly financial filing yesterday, which reported nearly \$60,000 raised in individual contributions, a release from the campaign announced the...

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JULY 11, 2025
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As for playing in the NBA, he said, “It’s every day for months. You know, you travel four or five times a week. It’s practicing every day. You have to play the best players that ever touched a basketball. You know, one night, and then you have to play the next best player the next night.”

He said it is difficult, but there is one thing he has learned, it is to keep going.

“You always find a way to do something the right way and do it better. You know, something I always stay in the gym and try to get better at everything I do. You know, I am just trying to be the best version of myself every single day, just trying to make everyone proud.”

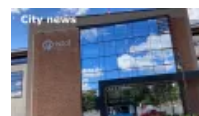


Dave Mills, center, reads from a plaque acknowledging Jay Calnan’s contribution to the Bristol Sports Hall of Fame, prior to presenting Calnan with the plaque. Looking on are Calnan, from left, BSHoF president Bob Kalat and Donovan Clingan. | David Fortier

Huckaby was master of ceremonies, introducing the speakers and providing questions during a question-and-answer session. Another product of Bristol’s sports culture, Huckaby shared some of his story playing basketball at Bristol elementary, middle and high schools.

During the q & a session, Huckaby brought up several anecdotes from his playing, one in particular: “My second college game (for Boston College) was at Duke. I was guarding a guy by the name of Grant Hill and (it was) a little different from guarding guys at Bristol Eastern and St. Paul.”

The evening, which was filled with good humor and plenty of laughs, began with a surprise for Calnan, when his sister, Dawn, rose from the audience for a hug, having made a special trip to Bristol for the event.



JULY 10, 2025

City council proposes land swap with state — Todd Street commuter lot for Forestville property

BRISTOL HISTORY



MAY 24, 2025

Photo of the week: Old New Departure complex Route 6

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JULY 28, 2024

Breaking the tape: Florence Merrill, Bristol’s forgotten Olympic hopeful



Jay Calnan receives a surprise at the start of the Bristol Sports Hall of Fame program when he finds out his sister, Dawn, made a special trip to be in Bristol for the event. | David Fortier

Calnan received a plaque acknowledging his contribution to the Bristol Sports Hall of Fame. During the presentation, Calnan asked that his high school football coach, Dave Mills, join him at the podium.

The evening ended with a drawing for basketballs signed by Clingan and guests lining up for photos with Clingan.

Sponsors of the event were the Tom & Melanie Barnes Family Foundation, Thomaston Savings Bank and Bristol Arts & Culture Fund.

Proceeds will benefit the Bristol Boys & Girls Club, the Main Street Community Foundation's Men & Boys Fund and the Women & Girls Fund.

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