

Emma Squires

2024 History Maker

Emma Gean Williams was born in Vaughn, MS in 1949 to Pinkie and Joshua Williams. In 1956, the Williams family of eleven moved to Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Emma began her long athletic career during her high school years. She began playing for Langhurst Motors as a right fielder in the Women's Fast Pitch League. For many summers, Emma traveled around the country with this tight-knit team, going several times to the ASA Women's Major Fast Pitch Nationals. During these years, Emma also began working at Jane Boyd (girls' leader) and then Bender Pool (swimming instructor). These activities evidence one of Emma's passions—staying active and helping others around her have positive interactions with sports.

After high school, Emma attended Coe College and Kirkwood Community College. At the latter, she enrolled in the art program and turned her attention to another love—ceramics. After earning her AA degree, Emma transferred to the University of Iowa, where from 1972-1974, she, as the only black female athlete, played softball, basketball, and field hockey, graduating with a double major in physical education and ceramics.

Soon after graduating, Emma began her 25+ year career as an umpire in the Triple-A Continental Amateur Baseball Association; many players and families remember with fondness the umpire who gave pointers on how to improve their play and the unique way in which she called strike from behind the plate.

In 1975, Emma began working at Rockwell Goss, a printing press company. Here, she joined the men's fast-pitch softball team—the only woman in the league—and played for five years as the first basewoman. In 1976, she married Scott Squires, and over the next several decades, they raised six children (Carlos, Christina, Cate, Cary, Camron, and Cory) and played in various adult sports leagues around Cedar Rapids. When Goss closed its doors in 2001, Emma took the opportunity they offered, and she returned to Kirkwood Community College to earn her Culinary Arts degree at 54 years old.

As if this isn't already a full life, Emma has also been inducted into the Cedar Rapids Softball Hall of Fame (1990); coached all of her children's and grandchildren's basketball, baseball, and soccer teams; volunteered for the HACAP Grandparents Program; took part in the Children of Promise Mentoring Program; and medaled in several events at the Senior Iowa Games (2023). She currently plays on the Grant Wood Gothics in the Granny Basketball League, a national 6-on-6 basketball league for women. In her downtime, you can look for Emma in one of her three happy places: her gardens—growing copious amounts of food that she then preserves, her kitchen—baking treats for others to enjoy, or at her puzzle table—assembling puzzles or playing a quiet game of Solitaire.

"I love playing sports. You get to meet different people, keep in shape, work with kids, and travel." — Emma Squires