



# Officials honored at NJSOA awards event

***September 16, 2024***

There's a simple truth about high school sports - without officials to oversee competition, the games, meets and matches can not happen.

There are roughly 6,500 people who officiate high school sports in New Jersey, and their efforts were recognized at the 3rd Annual New Jersey Scholastic Officials Association Awards Program, in cooperation with the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association, on Sept. 15 at the Pines Manor in Edison.

"On behalf of our approximately 280,000 student athletes that participate each year in interscholastic athletics, I want to say 'Thank You,'" stated Colleen Maguire, NJSIAA Executive Director, in her opening remarks.

More than 30 officials were recognized, including two who received special honors.

Robert Csigi, who has officiated more than 40 years, working volleyball, basketball, football and softball, was named National Distinguished Active Official of the Year by the NFHS. He is only the third official from New Jersey to ever receive the very prestigious award.

Lynne Clemente, who had been a gymnastics judge for 20 years, and is also the current NJSIAA state gymnastics rules interpreter, was named NFHS Section 1 Distinguished Active Official of the Year.

Distinguished Service Awards were presented to three individuals: Robert Byrnes (cross country and track), Gary Kessel (wrestling) and Allison Munch (softball).

The remaining honorees were recognized as Officials of the Year in their respective sports.

Among them was Penny Vaccarino, a field hockey official for 39 years.

"It's amazing to be honored," she said. "I love officiating, the friendships and all of the kids. It's a great thing to be involved with."

Matt McNulty was recognized for his work officiating ice hockey.

"I'm humbled and very honored to be recognized," he said. "I don't get here by myself. There are so many people who've helped me. You've got to know your stuff. There are also coaches that helped me along the way, like Bruce Shatel at Delbarton and Greg Toskos at Don Bosco, Peter Herms when he was at Seton Hall. With those guys, when I finally got to that level and got to work those games, you better know what you're doing, and they were helpful. And I can't say enough about someone like Jack Lally and everyone else in our association."

***Think you might be interested in becoming a high school sports official?  
Check out this link to learn more: <https://www.njsiaa.org/officials/become-official>***