



Officials honored at NJSOA awards event

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There's something that all should remember when it comes to high school sports competition - if not for officials, the events can not take place.

There are roughly 274,000 student-athletes in New Jersey participating in 34 sports. But those competitions rely on the approximately 6,500 men and women who officiate those events.

Their efforts were recognized on Sept. 13th at the 5th Annual New Jersey Scholastic Officials Association Awards Program, in cooperation with the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association, at the Pines Manor in Edison.



More than 35 officials who represent the state's 98 chapters in all sports were recognized, including four who received Distinguished Service Awards: Linda Dubois (Swimming), Sharon Hughes (Volleyball), Bill Milone (Track & Field) and Craig Yetman (Baseball).

The others were recognized as Officials of the Year in the various sports.

Dubois has been involved in swimming for almost 40 years. Among many contributions to the sport, she has been site director for the NJSIAA team championships since 1993 and a certified official since 2013.

Hughes began her volleyball officiating career in 1976, and among her many roles serving the sport, was NJSIAA tournament director from 1994 to 2021, state rules interpreter from 1998 to 2025 and assignor from 1994 to 2021.

Milone has been NJSIAA Spring Track Meet Director for the past 20 years as part of his work as an official.

Yetman, who worked as a baseball umpire from 1973 to 2019 and a basketball official from 1974 to 2019, has been the NJSIAA baseball interpreter since 2015. During his umpiring career, he worked 13 state championship games.

Like all of the others attending, he was proud to be honored at the event.

"It's a fraternity," he said. "All of my best friends are officials and a lot of them are here today. I've been

fortunate to receive other awards, but this one is special.”

That feeling was shared by those honored as Officials of the Year in their sports.

Jenielle Bailey, from IAABO Board 196 in South Jersey, was recognized for girls basketball. She’s been a basketball official since 2012, and works girls lacrosse as well.

“This was a surprise when I found out, and it’s really cool to be honored by my peers,” she said.

Suzanne Stout was selected for her work as a field hockey official. She is a member of the Central Chapter.

Aside from her 30 years officiating in that sport, she has been a lacrosse official for 15 years, and in the 1990s, was one of only two female softball umpires in Mercer County.

“It’s amazing to be honored,” she said. “Officiating is often a thankless job, so when you are recognized, it’s a wonderful thing. This is also a wonderful event, and I’m very grateful.”

