

Officials Appreciation Week Profile:

Wendy Picioccio

Wendy Picioccio's association with gymnastics has lasted a lifetime, from her days a young participant to her long involvement as an official.

"I graduated from Watchung Hills and was the captain of the team for four years," she said. "I also coached and choreographed the team's routines. When I graduated from college, I became the assistant coach at Somerville, with my YMCA coach, Cindy Wagner."

That was a move that also launched her career as an official.

"Cindy is responsible for me becoming an official, and is my mentor and friend. I have been officiating gymnastics since 1987 with the NJSIAA. I have held various positions throughout my judging tenure, and am currently the assignor for our chapter. We officiate the teams in the Skyland and Greater Middlesex conferences."

She's held various positions within the Central chapter, and also represented the group on state gymnastics committee for a decade.

"My love of gymnastics has been a constant in my life," Wendy said. "I became a USAG official in 2012, and spend most of my weekends in gyms throughout New Jersey officiating all levels of the sport. I love the gymnasts, coaches and my fellow officials. You could say they are part of my extended family."

Those relationships have made her time officiating especially enjoyable.

"I have had and still have many great relationships with so much respect for the gymnastics coaches, most of whom are former gymnasts like myself," she said. "The respect I have with my former coach, Cindy Wagner, has been the most influential relationship for me in the sport. Cindy trains all of our judges and supports the sport with every fiber of her being. It is amazing to see, and a goal for all of us to achieve as a representative of our sport. My sister, Sandra Givas, motivates me every day to be the best official and the best person I can be. Her love and commitment to our sport is amazing. Sandra is the president of our chapter, and the state assignor. We are all lucky to have Cindy and Sandra in our chapter. They make every official the best they can be, and we have fun as well, which is why I am still officiating."

Wendy was recently recognized for her service by being selected Gymnastics Official of the Year by the New Jersey Scholastic Officials Association.

Gymnastics is not the sport that Wendy officiates. She joined the ranks of Track and Field officials in 2012.

"I enjoy officiating a second sport, and love the contrast between the two," she said.



Getting to know NJSIAA sports official Wendy Picioccio:

What do you do in your job as an interpreter and assignor?

“The most important thing as an assignor is to send the best judging panels to our competitions. We want our judges to enjoy and love each season they officiate. We have a few officials that have been judging since the 1970’s. We work with the officials to ensure their officiating schedules work with their personal and professional lives. I want my judges to know I am fair, and will do my best to work with them through the changes from our teams, schools and their own life changes and issues.”

What do you enjoy most about being an official?

“The gymnasts are why I am still judging the sport after all these years. The pride and confidence the athletes display throughout each season are what makes me love the sport, regardless of the level of the gymnastics being performed.”

Do you have a favorite memory from officiating an event?

“When I get the opportunity to give the athletes feedback to help them get the best score possible, and I see them implement the changes, those are my favorite memories. Last year at the NJSIAA State meet, a few senior gymnasts asked me if we could take a picture, to remember their favorite official during their high school career. That made my day, and my season. The gymnasts are why we work hard every year to be the best official we can be.”

What’s the best part about any given day of officiating?

“When a gymnast makes her routine, or nails her new trick, that is the best part of officiating. Seeing the athlete happy and loving the sport is my best part of any meet I officiate.”

Do you have any memories from your first meet as an official?

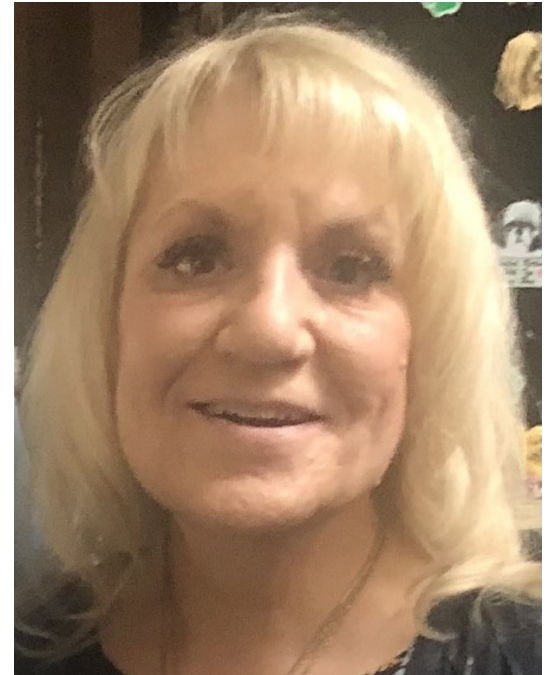
“Yes. I was terrified and scared I would not remember the rules, and not be a strong official for the meet. It did work out, and I enjoyed the day. I also had a gymnast fall from the balance beam six times and curse as she left the gym. Proof that the sport can be very hard and frustrating, and we all can feel overwhelmed and angry with our performance, both as an athlete and an official. The gymnast went to floor and made her routine and won the FX. That is the sport of gymnastics, and often life.”

Do you have a funny memory of an interaction between yourself and an athlete or coach?

“One year at the individual state meet, a high level gymnast mounted the beam and fell on her mount. She calmly looked at her coach and said, “Did I just fall on my mount?” Her reply was classic, and I tried not to laugh. “Well, you are on the floor, so yes, I guess you did fall on your mount. Get back on the beam, please.”

What’s the biggest misconception about the job of being an official?

“That we know everything and never make a mistake. As an official, if we make an error, we take responsibility



for it, and correct it for the athlete. I never get upset if a coach questions our scores. We all can learn from the experience, and make sure the gymnast earns every point (or tenth of a point in our sport) that she deserves and earned in her performance.”

What would you say to anyone thinking about becoming an official?

“If you love the sport, then try officiating. It may not be for everyone, but if you do not try, you will always wonder what could have been?”

***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>***