

## **PRESS RELEASE**

January 30, 2014

### **ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS HONOR THE MILLBURN H.S. STATE CHAMPION GIRLS TENNIS & DOUBLES TEAMS AND ENTIRE ATHLETIC PROGRAM FOR WINNING THE SHOP RITE CUP**

(Newark, NJ) – During its Wednesday, January 29, 2014, meeting at the Hall of Records, the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders honored state champion Millburn H. S. girls tennis players and the school's athletic program as a whole: the girls tennis team for winning both the 2013 Group 4 State Championship and Tournament of Champions; the girls doubles team of Stephanie Chen Schmidt and Sandy Xie for winning the 2013 New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) Doubles Tournament State Championship; and the athletic department for being awarded the 10th Annual ShopRite Cup by the NJSIAA as the top Group 4 high school sports program in New Jersey for the 2012-13 school year. The Board's commendations were sponsored and presented by Freeholder Vice President Patricia Sebold of Livingston and District 4 Freeholder Leonard Luciano of West Caldwell.



Essex County Freeholders Patricia Sebold (center) and Leonard Luciano (center right) honored the Millburn H.S. Girls Tennis Team and Doubles Team for winning their respective 2013 state championships, who were accompanied by their coach, Bill Wickenheisser (7th from left). Millburn H.S. Athletic Director Dr. Theodore D'Alessio (center, holding cup) was also recognized on behalf of the high school's athletic program, which was awarded the prestigious NJSIAA ShopRite Cup for being the best Group 4 program in New Jersey. PHOTO BY GLEN FRIESON

#### **Girls Tennis Team:**

The Millburn High School Girls Tennis Team won both the 2013 Group 4 State Championship and the Tournament of Champions to finish its spectacular season undefeated, 26-0, and ranked as the #1 girls tennis team in New Jersey. In the state tournament, the Millers first defeated

Plainfield H.S. (5-0), Watchung Hills H.S. (5-0), Linden H.S. (5-0) and then Bridgewater-Raritan H.S. (4-1), to win their 8th consecutive North Jersey Section 2, Group 4 Sectional Championship and 31st sectional championship overall. They then went on to defeat West Windsor Plainsboro South H.S. (3-2) and then Cherry Hill East H.S. (5-0) on October 17, 2013, to win its 2nd consecutive Group 4 title, eighth consecutive Group title and 19th title overall. Advancing to the Tournament of Champions, the team defeated Pingry (4-1) before downing Haddonfield H.S. (4-1) in the championship match.

The team also won the Essex County Tournament and the Super Essex Conference-American Division Championship for the 5th consecutive year; and was ranked by *The Star-Ledger* as the #1 team in New Jersey, Group 4 team and Essex County. The team's accomplishments were further acknowledged by the newspaper by its recognition of six of its players as follows: Stephanie Schrage, Stephanie Chen Schmidt, Sandy Xie, Anna Zakusilo and Sydney Zirlin were all named to the 1st Team All-State, 1st Team All-Group 4 and 1st Team All-Essex County; and Jane Bary was named to the 3rd Team All-Group 4 and 1st Team All-Essex County. Additionally, Stephanie Schrage was named *The Star-Ledger's* Essex County "Player of the Year". The magnitude of the team's supremacy was reflected in the fact that its players claimed five of the seven positions on both the 1st Team All-State and All-Group 4 teams, six of the seven positions on the 1st Team All-Essex County, and that the state doubles championship match was an all-Millburn affair.

The team was comprised of: seniors Stephanie Chen Schmidt (Captain), Sandy Xie (Captain), Caroline Levine and April Liu; juniors Jane Bary (Captain), Rebecca Blevins, Ingrid Waung and Anna Zakusilo; sophomores Elizabeth Gray and Anna Mandel; and freshmen Stephanie Schrage, Samantha Siegel and Sydney Zirlin. They were coached by Bill Wickenheisser and Lee Robinson.

### **Girls Doubles Team:**

The doubles team of Stephanie Chen Schmidt and Sandy Xie won the 2013 NJSIAA Doubles Tournament State Championship on October 16, 2013, at Mercer County Park in West Windsor, when they bested their Millburn High School teammates Anna Zakusilo and Sydney Zirlin, 6-2, 6-4, marking the first time in tournament history that two doubles teams from the same high school reached the final.

In the doubles tournament, Stephanie and Sandy, both seniors and seeded #2, defeated teams from West Windsor Plainsboro South H.S. (6-2, 6-2), Rumson-Fair Haven H.S. (7-6, 6-3), J. P. Stevens H.S. (6-1, 6-2) and South Brunswick H.S. (7-5, 7-5) before winning the title against their 8th-seeded teammates. Stephanie and Sandy became only the second doubles team in Millburn's storied girls' tennis program history to win the NJSIAA Doubles Tournament State Championship, the first championship occurring in 2008. They were also crowned Essex County Doubles Champions, marking the third consecutive year that Stephanie was a county doubles champion.

Stephanie and Sandy completed their superlative season undefeated at 25-0, and were both named to the 1st Team All-State, All-Group 4 and All-Essex County teams by *The Star-Ledger*.

### **ShopRite Cup:**

Millburn High School was awarded the 10th Annual ShopRite Cup by the NJSIAA as the top Group 4 high school sports program in New Jersey for the 2012-13 school year.

Throughout the school year, high school athletic programs across the state accumulated points based on their performances in championship play in the 33 NJSIAA-sanctioned sports, and received three additional points per season whenever none of their student-athletes were

disqualified during the fall and spring seasons. Millburn accumulated a total of 56 points to finish ahead of all other Group 4 schools on the strength of first place finishes in boys soccer, girls soccer, girls tennis and boys tennis; a second place finish in boys golf; third place finishes in boys cross country and boys fencing; and for having none of its student-athletes disqualified in the fall or spring seasons.

The extraordinary competitive success of Millburn's athletic programs, as well as the highly-respected and dignified manner in which they are consistently conducted while demonstrating the highest ideals of sportsmanship, has brought great pride to the school's administration, staff, coaches and student-athletes, as well as to the residents of the Township of Millburn and Essex County.

The Board's commendation was accepted by Athletic Director Dr. Theodore D'Alessio on behalf of Superintendent Dr. James Crisfield, Principal Dr. William S. Miron and the staff, coaches and student-athletes of Millburn High School.

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