

PRESS RELEASE

April 16, 2015

ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS HONOR JOSEPH SURIANO ON HIS RETIREMENT AS WEST ORANGE H. S. CROSS-COUNTRY COACH

(Newark, NJ) – The Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders honored Joseph Suriano of West Orange on his retirement as coach of the West Orange H. S. Cross-Country Team during its Wednesday, April 15, 2015, meeting held at Bloomfield Town Hall. Freeholder Patricia Sebold of Livingston, who taught English with Suriano at the high school until her retirement more than a decade ago, sponsored and presented the Board’s commendation to him in recognition of his outstanding 43-year coaching career.



Freeholder Patricia of Sebold presented Joseph Suriano of West Orange with a commendation in recognition of his recent retirement as coach of the West Orange H. S. Cross-Country Team. Sebold and Suriano taught English together at the high school for many years until the freeholder’s retirement from teaching more than a decade ago. The presentation was made on Wednesday, April 15th, during the Freeholder Board’s meeting held at Bloomfield Town Hall. (Photo by Glen Frieson)

“Joe is not only a great teacher, but also a fantastic cross-country coach, and that’s why he’s here tonight”, said Sebold, “so the Freeholder Board can honor him now that he has retired from coaching after 43 incredibly successful years.” She went on to reminisce about their years together at West Orange H. S. saying, “Joe and I both taught English at the same grade level. We covered the same material and had similar class schedules, so as you can imagine we had a lot of time to talk about our professional lives, our personal lives, and to become good friends. And to be perfectly honest, Joe, I’ve missed you a lot since I retired. So it’s great to see you again!” She concluded the presentation by adding, “Joe Suriano is a legend in the sports history of West Orange, and especially in running, and he was recognized as such when the Stadium at West Orange H. S. was named in his honor. Joe, it is truly my pleasure to recognize you for your outstanding coaching career, and to present you with this well-deserved Commendation from the Board of Freeholders.”

Suriano spoke fondly of the years he spent teaching side-by-side with Freeholder Sebold saying, “Pat, was not only my friend for all those years, she was my mentor. She is and has been a ‘giver’ and I still use her teaching notes for “Animal Farm” to this day, and they’re still relevant!” He went on to thank the County for all it has done to promote cross-country in Essex County, “In Branch Brook Park we now run the Super Essex Conference meets, the County meet is held at Brookdale Park, and at Watsessing Park, where I used to run a on a poorly-maintained 1/5 mile track as a high school student, we now have an all-weather track.” Suriano ended by saying, “I’m been very fortunate because like Lou Gehrig, I’ve been able to do something that I love to do for 45 years. It’s been a very rewarding experience, and I want to thank Pat and the County for this award.”

Suriano grew up in West Orange and attended Our Lady of the Valley H. S. where he was played football and excelled at track, winning the 1965 Parochial State Champion in the 100-Yard Dash. He went on to earn his undergraduate and Master’s degree in Supervision from Seton Hall University. He began his teaching career as a Social Studies and English teacher at West Orange’s Edison Junior H. S. in 1969 where he taught until 1985 when he moved on to teach at West Orange High School, where he continues to teach today.

While teaching at Edison JHS, Suriano began his coaching career in 1971 as the cross-country and track coach at West Orange Mountain H. S. (which later became West Orange H. S.), serving as the coach of both teams from 1971-1999, and then solely as the cross-country coach from 2000 until his retirement from coaching in 2014. During his outstanding tenure, Suriano made an indelible mark on the history of cross-country and track at the high school, where he initiated Indoor Track, Girls Cross-Country and Girls Track as varsity sports. His knowledge and expertise made him an extraordinary teacher who coached his athletes to excellence through the years: he coached five All-Americans; had three student-athletes meet the qualifying standards for the United States Olympic Trials; and his WOHS Boys’ Cross-Country Teams posted 29 consecutive winning seasons to close-out his coaching career in 2014 with a dual-meet record of 15-2 while also being named the “Surprise Team of the Year” by *The Star-Ledger*.

Suriano has also been recognized on countless occasions for his extraordinary coaching ability; he was named All-Area “Coach of the Year” 16 times and was named the Essex County “Coach of the Year” on two occasions. He was also recognized for his exceptional classroom teaching ability by being named the West Orange “Teacher of the Year” on three occasions, which he continues today after 45 years.

He has also made an indelible mark on the history of the sport of running in the Township of West Orange; he co-founded the West Orange Masters Track Club for Masters (age 40+) and Submasters (age 30+), and was the 1976-1977 State Champion and All-American in the Submasters Division. He also organized the West Orange Mini-Marathon, which has since become known as the West Orange Town Run. He also organized and coached the Mountaintop Distance Running Team (ages 6-13), ran the Summer Track Program for the West Orange Recreation Department, and researched and wrote “Significant Achievements in Sports” for the West Orange Sesquicentennial Lecture Series. In recognition of his outstanding career, the West Orange H. S. Stadium was named in his honor. Freeholder Richardson was elected to his first term as District 2 Freeholder in November of 2014, and represents Irvington, Maplewood, and parts of Newark’s South and West Wards.

For Additional Information:
Gary Kroessig, Public Information
Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders
973-621-4452
gkroessig@freeholders.essexcountynj.org