

Mike Errico Award Art Schad

ART SCHAD, who introduced young boys and girls in Norwalk to the sport of wrestling when he helped start the city's first official youth program, is this year's *Mike Errico Award* recipient.

The Norwalk Old Timers' *Mike Errico Award* is presented to an individual, team, or organization for the positive impact, influence, and contribution they made to the local sports scene.

Schad certainly transcended all those qualities through his work with the Norwalk Youth Mad Bulls Wrestling program, an all-volunteer non-profit organization established in 2010.

A former New York State high school wrestler and later a collegiate wrestler at Southern Connecticut State University, Schad was the Mad Bulls' first and only head coach. Along with program director Randy Haus, another wrestling enthusiast from Minnesota, they not only made the Mad Bulls a reality, but changed the wrestling culture in Norwalk

with a much-needed youth program for kids in kindergarten through eighth grade.

And while the Mad Bulls impacted the local wrestling community, particularly the Norwalk High and Brien McMahon programs, their influence was also felt by young wrestlers in several surrounding towns it drew from.

All told, in its proud and successful 13-year existence, the Mad Bulls program has developed 58 individual state champions, 10 New England champs, and 15 National All-Americans. With the help of a dedicated group of assistant coaches—most of them parents—the Mad Bulls travel team wrestled at regional tournaments all around New England as well as in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, North Carolina, Iowa, Texas, California, Florida, and Nevada in order to seek out the best competition. Through that kind of head-to-head competition, many individual wrestlers on the Mad Bulls have been nationally ranked, placing high and



Art Schad, the Norwalk Old Timers' 2023 Mike Errico Award recipient, proudly displays the trophy his Mad Bulls youth wrestling team brought back to Norwalk after winning the 2019 New England Team Championship.

earning medals throughout the country at every age level.

In addition, the Mad Bulls co-ed team included 10 girls, at the time the largest female wrestling roster in the state. Many of those girls developed into state champions themselves while two are nationally ranked.

Together with the male wrestlers on the team, the Mad Bulls had seven consecutive years of placing more wrestlers in the Connecticut State Open tournament than any other youth wrestling team in the state and won the New England team championship in 2017 and 2019.

On the high school level, Mad Bulls alumni

have gone on to win many FCIAC individual titles, along with five State Open champs and five High School All-Americans.

But for Art Schad, the mission of the Mad Bulls was about a whole lot more.

“It was never about winning championships or team titles,” he said. “It was always about coaching kids and teaching them about a solid work ethic, determination, and perseverance. It was always about creating future leaders and solid human beings. After all, we as coaches are here to educate, nurture, and inspire. The accomplishments are just a byproduct of that philosophy.”