

Maria Marino



Maria Marino has always excelled in athletics, going all the way back to her days growing up in Norwalk. From Cranbury School to West Rocks Middle School to Norwalk High School, where she was a three-sport athlete in volleyball, softball, and cheerleading year-round. She was even a member of the NHS twirling team.

But when it came to the sport Marino excelled in the most, she was a “late bloomer.”

Girls' golf wasn't offered when she was in high school, but that didn't stop Maria Marino. Instead, she picked the game up during her senior year at Norwalk.

“My mom played so I started playing,” Marino said.

She was certainly a fast learner. Just three years later, Marino captured the 1979 Oak Hills Women's Club championship. It would be the first of an amazing seven straight women's championships at the local public course.

But Marino was just getting started. In 1985, she won the Connecticut State Women's Amateur championship. It wasn't long after that she relocated to Florida to improve her golf

game, and in 1995 she turned professional and became a member of the Ladies Professional Golf Association.

Now a resident of Florida, next year will be Marino's 25th year with the LPGA. During that time she served on the organization's National Marketing Committee, was Southeast Section treasurer, a member-mentor advisor, and a participant in LPGA golf clinics for women.

She also teamed up with LPGA Hall of Famer Joanne Carner, Marino's idol, and started a ladies golf academy where she mentored other LPGA professionals and gave them the opportunity to work with Carner.

For 13 years, Marino has also been an “ambassador” for the Honda Classic, a PGA Tour event held in Marino's hometown of Palm Beach Gardens. She was not only an original member, but the only woman to serve in that capacity for over 10 years.

Marino's professional golf career also includes being a national instructor as well as a member of the Golf Writers Association of America with several articles published in national golf magazines. In addition, Marino is on the board of the First Tee Cares, overseeing the Broward, Palm Beach, and Treasure Coast chapters.

The Norwalk native is also very involved in her community. A 1982 graduate of UConn, where she earned a degree in business, Marino is the proud owner of a real estate firm based in Palm Beach Gardens. She serves as the executive director of the Jupiter Children's Foundation, raising over two million dollars for the underserved children of Jupiter through the running of an annual golf tournament. She's also very proud of the fact she was the first person to ever teach a clinic for underprivileged children in New York's Central Park.

Marino also sits on a multitude of county and statewide boards while lending her talents to many public initiatives targeted at enriching the lives of at-risk youth. In 2017, Marino was named ‘Woman of the Year’ by the Palm Beach North Chamber.

Her extensive community involvement led her to seek public office and she was elected to the Palm Beach Gardens City Council in 2016. One year later she was appointed as mayor of Palm Beach Gardens, a city of 55,000.

Marino served two one-year terms — the only female mayor of Palm Beach Gardens City for more than one year — but decided not to seek a third term so she could run for County Commissioner in 2020.

“It's somehow fitting that, 40 years later, I am back to being a cheerleader, only this time it's for the city I am proud to call home,” the former Norwalk High cheerleader said.

But Maria Marino has never forgotten her roots.

“While Norwalk has not been my home for a while, it is where my heart is.”