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Award-winning trainer loves to help

By: [Steve Feitl](#) , Sports Editor

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Lawrenceville's head trainer Goldenberg named service award-winner

Michael Goldenberg has made a career out of helping people.

Whether it be getting athletes back on the field quickly in his role of head athletic trainer at The Lawrenceville School or putting together Web sites for three different athletic training organizations, Goldenberg always seems to be giving a hand.

Recently, he was rewarded for all his helping ways with the National Athletic Trainers' Association's 2002 Athletic Trainer Service Award.

Goldenberg was honored to receive an award for something he enjoys doing anyway.

"I love being involved and I'm at a point in my life where I'm at where I've always wanted to be," he said. "I'm trying to make a difference in my profession and I guess people have appreciated that."

The award recognizes outstanding service to the athletic training profession and NATA at the state and district levels. No more than three award recipients are selected per state annually.

Candidates must have held NATA's Athletic Trainer Certified credential for at least 15 years.

The award was presented to Goldenberg on June 17 at NATA's annual meeting in Dallas.

"Mike is richly deserving of the award," said Jack Baynes, chairman of NATA's honors and awards committee. "He has dedicated his career to the betterment of the athletic training profession."

After growing up on Long Island, Goldenberg went on to Plymouth College in New Hampshire, where he was accepted into its athletic training program.

He became interested in the profession when the traditional male teenage growth spurt skipped him and short-circuited his football career.

"When I was in high school, everybody else got bigger, but I didn't," Goldenberg laughed. "I couldn't play football anymore so I became the manager. While working on the sidelines, I then saw what the trainers did in college and thought it was great."

From Plymouth he got an athletic training job at the Brewster Academy in New Hampshire. A boarding school, the Brewster Academy was his first experience with a private school — though it wouldn't be his last.

"I'd always been a public school guy," he said. "The only private schools in Long Island were Catholic schools. Being Jewish, I didn't go

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there."

While working for his master's degree at the State University of New York in Buffalo (SUNY-Buffalo), Goldenberg found out about his future employer, The Lawrenceville School.

"We were playing another lacrosse team and they said they just got back from a lacrosse tournament in Lawrenceville," he recalled. "The team was raving about it and all the things the school had. They said it had its own golf course. I couldn't believe it."

Fourteen years have passed since Goldenberg started at Lawrenceville. With a school physician, Dr. Robin Karpf, on campus and an assistant, Dr. Steve Weintraub (who is an athletic trainer for the Trenton Thunder minor-league baseball team), on call, Goldenberg loves the setup at his school.

"There is a standard set of protocols about what needs to be sent to the doctor and what doesn't," he said.

For example, if a player comes off a field with a sprained ankle, as long as it's not too severe Goldenberg will work with the athlete to rehabilitate it.

But if the ankle is "swollen like a balloon," Goldenberg might brace the ankle and send the athlete to see Karpf. If she deems it necessary, she might order an X-ray, which can be done with the campus' facilities. From there, orthopedic specialists may have to be brought in.

It all adds up to a luxurious operation for a high school athletic trainer, Goldenberg said.

"It's a beautiful setup here at The Lawrenceville School," he said. "I feel like I'm one of the luckiest athletic trainers in the country."

Aside from his duties as head athletic trainer at Lawrenceville, Goldenberg also was recently elected to his second term on the Board of Athletic Trainers for the state.

He has developed Web sites for three different athletic training associations and remains Webmaster for them. He also is chairman of NATA's Webmaster's Advisory Group — a group he started in 2001.

Goldenberg, who recently turned 40, has been married to his wife, Jacqueline, since 1984 and they have three children: Lawrenceville sophomore Caryn, 15; Samantha, 12; and Jared, 10.

But from his work as an athletic trainer, it often must seem like the Goldenbergs have a large extended family.

"By doing therapy with them day in and day out, you see these kids improve and grow up," he said. "My wife still can't get over the fact we get to invited to weddings all the time."

It's that kind of relationship with the athletes that Goldenberg cherishes. He calls working with the kids "an unbelievable feeling."

He said students let their guard down around the trainer, who doesn't give them grades or affect their playing time. Goldenberg said he is able to talk with them on a personal level and really get to know who they are.

And then when he is able to help them get back on the field in a timely manner, they are all the more appreciative.

One time, Goldenberg came in contact with a soccer player who had been plagued by a severe groin pull for an extended period of time.

"Before the season, we did a lot of work with him," he said. "So when the season started he scored a goal and it turned out to be the winning goal.


"He came running off the field — all covered in mud — and jumped on me. He said, 'Thanks. That goal was for you.' There's moments like that all of the time."



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