

# Hartwell Soccer Volunteer Trains t

by Chris Seymour

What should a youth soccer referee do when a coach or parent creates a problem? How should a ref cover the field? What should a ref do in case of a dispute?

Joanne Marcoux has the answer to all those questions and more.

As the Director of Referees for the Hartwell Recreation League, Marcoux has mentored more than 250 youth referees over the last 12 years and continues to foster new ones.

Marcoux was honored at the annual Connecticut Junior Soccer Association (CJSA) meeting on Jan. 29 in Cromwell with a "Volunteer Recognition Award" for her contributions to Glastonbury Hartwell Soccer Club.

During the Hartwell spring season (which lasts from March to about the end of June) and fall season (early September to early November), Marcoux spends numerous hours each week taking care of administrative tasks and mentoring her young referees, who can start as young as age 12.

"It is usually their first job, so I try to work with them," she explained. "This is their first responsibility of learning how to sign up for games and making sure they get paid and making sure they get there on time."

Marcoux, who works as a Certified Public Accountant, explained she also tries to work with parents, "To just say, 'Let your kid own this and let them be the one that communicates with me,'" she said.

Most of Marcoux's pool of around 100 Recreation League referees are adolescents who are 12-years-old and up, though she does have some adults and college kids in the mix.

"I work with them to take ownership and teach them responsibility and they are getting paid so we expect them to perform to standards," said Marcoux. Payment ranges from about \$15 to \$30 depending on the game and the referee's duties.

Referees are limited to two games a weekend in order to give everyone an opportunity to do some officiating.

Marcoux explained that there are two ways to become a referee: through a CJSA program, which is an online certification program that qualifies one to ref in both the rec league and the travel league, or through a two-day program offered by Hartwell each spring.

"We hold a two-day training program for kids who just kind of want to get their feet wet and see if they like to referee," she explained. "And so they go to our two-day rec training program and that just qualifies them to be able to ref in the Recreation League."

The Hartwell program is limited to 25 new referees each year, according to Marcoux. This spring's training session is full and has a waiting list.

A 27-year resident of Glastonbury, Marcoux and her husband Stephen have four daughters who are alumnae of Glastonbury High School and Hartwell Soccer Club.

"I got involved with [refereeing] when my

second daughter wanted to referee so we went through the program together," recalled Marcoux. "I was a soccer player in high school [in Rochester, NY] and college [at Bucknell University] so I have always been involved in the game. And I was a coach for a number of years in the travel league here at Hartwell."

During the season, Marcoux sets up the referee schedule and actively engages with her officials. "I set up the schedule each week, input the games, and monitor it; and the kids sign up for the games that fit their schedules," she said.

"And then I am usually out there all day Saturday morning, and I go from field to field, when I have new refs that are starting," she continued. "And I will kind of get on the sidelines and work with them to get them comfortable."

Marcoux also works as an advocate for her referees when an issue arises with a coach, parent or other individual who doesn't demonstrate proper sportsmanship.

"There's a lot of confidence that [referees] have to develop to interact with adults and I try to help them through that process, but we do have some parents and coaches who are not well behaved—I get communication from other coaches and other parents if there is a problem and I work with them to be the advocate for the referee," she stated.

When there are problem parents or coaches, Hartwell refs are advised not to engage with the individual causing issues and instead to report it back to Marcoux or a coach.

"There are usually two to three incidents a season and we usually hear right away from one of the coaches and then I reach out to the ref and discuss it with them," she explained. "Hartwell has a zero tolerance policy with parents and coaches giving any type of abuse to refs and we deal with the offenders very promptly to ensure that it does not happen again."

If there is an issue with a coach specifically, the president of Hartwell or the head of the rec league will contact the coach immediately and discuss the issue, according to Marcoux.

"Often, the coach was caught up in the heat of the moment and will quickly apologize to the ref," she explained. "If we have repeated issues with a coach, they could be prohibited from coaching again."

Marcoux said she has also had to remove parents from the sidelines and usher them to their cars—but that hasn't happened in recent years and is a rare occurrence.

Usually the parent will apologize to the ref after the incident. "We have very few of these



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# Volunteer Trains the Refs



**Hartwell Recreation League Director of Referees Joanne Marcoux (left) was honored at the recent Connecticut Junior Soccer Association (CJSA) meeting with a Volunteer Recognition Award for her contributions to youth soccer. Marcoux is pictured above with Hartwell president Mary Kay Brophy.**

incidents each season – maybe one or two at the most, but often none,” she stressed.

Will Demers and Grant Manning of Hartwell nominated Marcoux for the Volunteer Recognition Award.

“Will and Grant are the two volunteers who teach the 2-day Recreation League ref course in the spring each year,” she said. They have been doing it for years and are just wonderful individuals. They help me out whenever I need it with refereeing as well. They are both certified travel refs and fill in at the rec level whenever they can. They also ref the co-ed high school games on Sunday afternoons and help mentor the new refs whenever I ask. I couldn’t do any of this without their support!”

In an announcement about Marcoux’s award, Hartwell said it was “very happy” to have her

involved with its soccer club. Hartwell President Mary Kay Brophy said Marcoux has trained and mentored hundreds of new referees—“often going above and beyond the role to encourage these teenagers beyond their role on the soccer field.”

Brophy also noted that Marcoux is an active supporter and board member of the ABC House of Glastonbury. “We are incredibly fortunate to have someone of Joanne’s competence and compassion supporting Hartwell Soccer,” she said.

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