

Best of SNO

Sports

Archery team surprises founder with national Coach of the Year Award for his work to build, sustain team

Just a week before he takes his three squads to nationals, Jim DeLine is honored for a decade-long journey that began with a random meeting at a conference for PE teachers



Jim DeLine surveys the crowd of admiring parents after doing a final cheer with his archers, who surprised him after practice today with the news that they had nominated him and he had won recognition as the 2021 National Archery in the Schools Program Coach of the Year.

[Sophie Leung-Lieu](#), Mac

photojournalism

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“The dream is free, the work costs extra.”

These words echo from Coach Jim DeLine at the Highland Park Elementary School gym at the end of every practice.

We practice at 6:15 in the morning, at lunch meetings, and after school until 5 p.m.

The message of motivation inspires each archer and serves as a constant reminder of how we will find success in archery but also in life.

When I first took P.E. at Highland Park in third grade, I remember trying archery. I was led by my coach who was also trying something new.

Since then, we have grown for six more years, observing and experimenting with the ins and outs of archery. The balance between a mentor and the mentee is very important because you can assist each other in this journey of learning.

“I think the most important thing I can do as a coach is help you be the best person you can be, because I don’t know you as well as you,”
DeLine said.

Another duty as a coach is to inspire and influence archers in a positive way. One of his many strategies is to put your competitive mindset in a category.

“If I were to ask you to put yourself in a circle, and one circle was competitive tenacity, the other one was emotional grit, and the other was cognitive problem solving, where would you put yourself?”
DeLine asks his archers.

Competitive tenacity means you hate to lose, no matter what you're playing; emotional grit means that no matter what happens, you will be able to emotionally handle it.

Cognitive problem solving means that your primary motivation is in wanting to figure out problems.

After determining how each of his archers answers that question, he will say, "Now to be a great archer, you need to figure out who you aren't."

The archers aren't the only group inspired by DeLine's coaching' their parents learn from him as well.

One parent who has been there since the beginning said, "Coach DeLine really teaches you how to work as a team."

And the team of parents and student archers appreciate DeLine so much that they rallied behind the coach's back to nominate him as the 2021 National Archery in the Schools Program Coach of the Year. They sprang the good news on him today that he had won the award after a full day of practice that occurred in flights thanks to the pandemic and lasted from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m.

The nomination is a thank you not just for this year but for his tireless commitment to building an archery program over the past decade, first at Highland Park and as his archers grew older at Lamar Middle School and most recently McCallum.





THE GET BACK POLE: Coach Jim DeLine poses in front of the archery storage unit at Central Texas Archery. In his hand is the “Get Back Pole,” a social distancing stick that is also used as a coaching tool in regards to archery form. “The boxing glove is to keep people socially distanced and for long distance fist bumps,” DeLine said. Sophomore Geneva Miller painted and added glitter to the pole. “I wanted to make it a bit chaotic and fun, like coach,” Miller said. “I made a joke during practice about adding glitter too, and he really liked the idea so I just went with it.”
([Sophie Leung-Lieu](#))

The nomination testimonial made the case in statement after statement that read like verses of the same tribute song. His Highland Park team has won five consecutive state titles and have placed at nationals in every year except 2020, the year that COVID-19 caused the national tournament to be canceled.

His archers and their parents appreciate the team’s competitive success, but they say that success is secondary to the more fundamental lessons that DeLine teaches his student archers.

“Coach DeLine spends countless hours teaching archery, and he knows how to train champions, but he is even more gifted in building communities,” the main nomination testimonial read. “Coach’s champions are winners not only because they have won tournaments, but because of the life skills they have learned from him. He knows how to motivate and reach each student. He teaches them to cheer each other on by forging friendships and mutual respect for one another. While archery can be an individual sport, he teaches them to work as a team.”

Sophomore archer Marielle Musick’s assessment of her coach was typical.

“Coach is in charge and leads three different teams that range from ages 11-18,” Musick wrote. “He gives each and every one of our teams the time and attention to practice and improve. He is one of the greatest teachers I have ever had, and I am

thankful that he is always giving 100%, even though he puts in over 12-hour workdays to be with us. He is a great man, and I am grateful to have met and worked with him.”

Mary Rose, a McCallum Archery Board member who also happens to be Musick’s mom, concluded her statement of support with a ringing endorsement that DeLine should win the award.

“Who else could connect the dots and unscramble the problems to get archery nested into three schools? Who else moves COVID out of the way so kids can continue to compete at something they love? Who else coaches the range of child archers that Coach Jim DeLine supervises week in and week out? To me, he is Coach of the Year every year. But given what he made possible for his own daughter, for my daughter, and for all the other archers who went to State this year, he is surely Coach of [the Year] this year.”

The NASP judges agreed and honored his decade-long commitment by naming DeLine a 2021 NASP Coach of the Year.

How the program began and grew

DeLine discovered archery through his primary job as the physical education teacher at Highland Park Elementary. He attends P.E. conferences every December. On one occasion, he met a gentleman named Bernie Kessner at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Kessner introduced to him the National Archery in the Schools Program, or NASP, and once they had support from the community and the principal, DeLine sought to solve the ultimate deal breakers in his effort to bring archery to Highland Park: training and funding.

“So the timeline starts in 2012, when we decided to have a program in December and by 2013 I had been trained. That April in 2013, I got trained to be a certified instructor



and then by the fall, we had this incredible event for fundraising at HP with an Olympic archer.”

The archer was Lindsay Carmicheal, an Austin native who [won a bronze medal at the Paralympic Olympics in Beijing](#). When she was 12, she had an injury in her right leg that caused her to struggle with walking for the rest of her life.

In 2013, HP hosted a fundraiser for their new program where about 300 people came down and pledged money for the program. DeLine would hang pledges on a target, and Carmichael would shoot at them, and if she hit yours, you would have to double your donation. DeLine says one moment he remembers clearly was when one dad wrote a \$1,000 dollar check as a pledge.

“He pulled it out and said “If you hit my signature or the date, I’ll triple it.”

She didn’t hit it, but she got real close and he ripped it up and we’re all thinking “aww,” but he wrote another one for \$3,000 bucks and donated it anyway.”

They raised over \$10,000, well past their original \$5,000 goal.



POST FUNDRAISER PHOTOSHOOT: Lindsey Carmicheal, her father and coach and Coach DeLine pose for a photo after the big fundraising event. “I was in third or fourth grade, and I had no idea that archery would grow this big in the next 10 years of my life,” said senior Mariana Torres-DeLine, team captain and Coach Jim DeLine’s daughter. “Little me had no idea what we started,” Photo courtesy of Jim DeLine.

“We had our first curriculum program back in 2014,” Deline remembered, “and then in 2015, we started a club and in 2016 was when you were a fourth grader, we had our Scottie Strong intra-tournament. It was a classroom tournament, and we took the classroom winners, and we had them compete.”

That year in 2016, DeLine went to the state competition and Bernie Kessner convinced him to make an official Highland Park archery team.

In 2016, I was a fifth grader, and my other classmates and I created a

team and competed at state.

“We had a team and to be honest with you, I coached out of fear because I didn’t want to suck or have us embarrass ourselves, but we ended up in second,” DeLine said.

For our first time competing in a state competition, we placed second to a team called Brock. They were the reigning champions in the past years and scored higher than us. We weren’t planning on going to nationals until a miscommunication occurred that left nationals in the questions.

“Everyone’s telling me ‘Let’s go to Kentucky,’” DeLine said, “and I had to bring everyone in that one day and say ‘OK, we’re not going,’ and then someone’s mom and dad convinced me to go.”



LOUISVILLE PORTRAIT: Coach Jim DeLine and the 2017 archery team poses for a professional photo at nationals in Louisville Kentucky. DeLine remembers “We had to retake this whole photo because the green screened background was interfering with the archers’ hair.” This photo was taken moments after the team shot to place ninth in the nation. Photo courtesy of Sophie Leung-Lieu.

We were practicing consistently and working hard to achieve the following five goals in Louisville, Kentucky, where the competition was held that year:

1. A team score of 3100
2. Average individual score of 250
3. Average individual amount of 10s (bullseye) being 5
4. Always professional, all the time, and
5. Beat Brock.

In order to improve mentally and prepare physically, Coach DeLine came up with an acronym: Think STRONG.

- S= stop, close your eyes.
- T=take a deep breath.
- R=relax.
- O=organize your routine.
- N=no negative talk!
- G=get started.

When nationals finally came, I remember feeling nervous but confident. We walked into the huge Louisville Expo Center and the bright glaring lights were beaming down on us and it was the type of experience that you never forget. When we were shooting, my target partner was an archer from New Mexico. It wasn't until three hours after I shot when my parents and Coach told me that I was shooting with the best girl archer in New Mexico, and I was matching her point by point. We also went to the Churchill Downs and saw the horses race. It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience. The moment we found out where we placed and where Brock placed we will never forget.

“I was just walking around the exhibit hall and I looked at my phone and boom, Brock came up,” DeLine said. “And they were 11th, I think, and we were 10th. And I thought, ‘Holy crap, we did it by one point, and that was when this program took off.’”

Brock had scored a team score of 3172, and we had scored 3173.

From then on, we told future archers that “every arrow counts.”

				180	
HIGHLAND PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	ELEMENTARY Team #1	Score: 3173	Tens: 104	Rank: 10 out of 180	TX
BROCK ISD	ELEMENTARY Team #1	Score: 3172	Tens: 116	Rank: 11 out of 180	TX
ROBERT R. TURNER ELEMENTARY	ELEMENTARY Team #1	Score: 3166	Tens: 118	Rank: 12 out of 180	TX

The official score sheet from the 2017 national tournament reveals that Highland Park beat their in-state rivals by a single point to earn a top 10 national finish. Courtesy of Sophie Leung-Lieu

The archery program continued from 2017 until now. Highland Park has placed first at the Texas State Championship every year from 2018-2021. But COVID hit, so there's an asterisk to the 2020 result because they had the highest qualifying scores.



DeLine hugs his daughter and the Mac archery team captain, Mariana Torres-DeLine after she delivered the surprise announcement that he had been named 2021 National Archery in the Schools Program Coach of the Year. The team and team parents nominated him for the award and had the privilege of sharing the news with him that he had won. ([Anna McClellan](#))

Archery arrives at McCallum

The archery team at McCallum is currently being coached by DeLine, with the help of co-captains Mariana Torres-DeLine and Genny Traynor (also team manager). Garrett Michulka and Eli Frank are also captains. We are practicing every Sunday at Central Texas archery with COVID protocols in place, preparing for this year's state and national competitions.

One of the two captains Mariana Torres-DeLine, started the team her freshman year, along with her dad: Coach DeLine.

“So I was the only student at McCallum at state; therefore, I was representing McCallum,” she said, recalling [her first state competition as a McCallum archer](#).

She competed as an individual, and said “You cannot afford to have an off day.”

They continued building a team and promoted it during her sophomore year to expanding a team her junior year.

“We got some space at Lamar to practice, we got a teacher sponsor, we made announcements, and we did posters, and we grew the team to six people,” Mariana said.

[The first McCallum archery team](#) consisted of Mariana Torres-DeLine, Garrett Michulka, Eli Turner, Genny Traynor, Zakiya Robertson, Elias Frank, Townes Hobratchk, Nathan Ray and Graham Protzmann.

They didn’t have enough people to be a full competitive team, so they were considered a club. Mariana continued to compete as an individual when she took her shot at the qualifying for state.

“I missed the cutoff score by a single point,” she recalled.

By the end of her junior year, though, the team had grown to 26. They also qualified for state, but couldn’t compete because state was cancelled due to COVID.

The disappointment put Mariana to the test as team captain.

“In my mind, what it means to be captain is just being a positive, encouraging force,” she said. “You don’t have to correct people’s technique.”

After many years of archery, Mariana is currently teaching classes at Central Texas Archery and is a certified NASP instructor.

Even during her interview, she made sure to credit her teammates for their role in building the team.

“I don’t want to take all the credit because it wasn’t all just me,” she insisted. “I’m also so insanely proud of this team. There are some people that I’ve known for a while now that have grown so much.”

Her dad maintains that growth is never-ending.

“What makes archery unique is that it’s a lifetime sport” he said.

Archery can be continued for the rest of your life, but it’s up to you to make a choice to stop.

“One day you’re going to put your bow down, and you’re going to pick up a scaffold or a legal pad or you’re going to go fly an airplane or invent the next vaccine, and that’s what you’re going to do at some point, and that’s what you should do,” he said.

When seniors graduate, not everyone is going to pursue archery.

“Am I going to continue doing archery after I graduate?” Mariana asks. “I don’t know.”

Nobody knows exactly how the future will go, but with archery, you can decide your path.

“The fact that you were able to go through an archery program that will help you, I hope, with your skills and knowing what it means to fail,” Coach DeLine said.

“‘The dream is free, the work costs extra’ and ‘we are all we got, and we are all we need,’” he said. “Trust me, that stuff will serve you well when you are trying to save the world when the world needs to be saved, and the world is going to need a lot of help.”

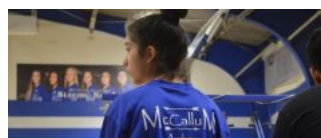


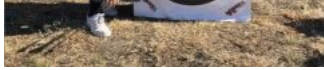


TURN BACK TIME: Current freshman Sophie Leung-Lieu and Coach Jim DeLine in 2016 (bottom) and 2020 (top). “The bottom [photo] is saying ‘This is how you do this,’” DeLine said, “and the top [photo] is ‘Coach, this is how you do this?’” DeLine said the difference illustrated how far Leung-Lieu had come over her seven years in the archery program. “You’ve come such a long way,” DeLine said to her. “Now you’re the teacher.” (Nhi Lieu)

Sophie Leung-Lieu has been in Jim DeLine’s archery program for the past seven years. A version of this profile story was submitted as part of the successful nomination that earned DeLine a 2021 NASP Coach of the Year Award. Leung-Lieu and her McCallum, Lamar Middle School and Highland Park Elementary School will compete in the 2021 NASP National Archery Tournament on Saturday in the Lamar Middle School gym. The competition is virtual with each team competing locally and then submitting the scores to national tournament officials.

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