

Frezza's impact on Plainfield felt, recognized

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(Photo: Mary Iuvone/Correspondent)

PLAINFIELD - Keith Young will never forget it. A city resident, Young was a heavyweight wrestler at Union Catholic High School in 1989, competing individually since the school didn't have a team. He had a difficult time garnering attention. But Harry Frezza noticed him and wrote a story.

"People noticed me when I went into the region tournament, Rutgers noticed me," Young, now Plainfield High School's assistant wrestling coach, recalled. "When I walked into the regions and people started chanting my name, that's when I knew, 'Wow, I made it because

of Harry.'" The now-retired Frezza, who briefly covered news and then sports for the Courier News and later the Home News Tribune and MyCentralJersey.com for 35 years, was honored before Plainfield's match with Dover Friday night.

It was a fitting tribute to Frezza, who has always had a close affinity to the sport. Even during the time he served as Courier News sports editor from 1992-94, he still covered the beat.

"We could not let this man walk off without paying tribute. I can't believe we had the opportunity to honor him," Young said.

The Queen City is a place that's near and dear to Frezza. "I know how special the history is of Plainfield High School and Plainfield as a city, and there were a lot of rough times Plainfield had," Frezza said. "I always looked at them as the little caboose that could, but always wanted to see them regain the glory.

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"There's so many good people in the city, and I know Plainfield has taken some pretty hard hits to its reputation, but there's a lot of good things here, as you can see tonight. A lot of great people who really care about trying to get them back to being respectable in all sports."

Although Plainfield's wrestling team has struggled in recent years, the future is bright. With 24 freshman of 28 wrestlers in the program and first-year head coach William Dodd in place alongside Young, the culture is changing rapidly.

And when they ascend, hopefully someone, like Frezza, notices, Young said.

"Inner-city programs often times don't have newspaper support, and (Harry) stayed with us and believed in us," Young said.

Young said Frezza transcends the sport and the profession.

"He saw the change to Internet and he adjusted, but his style was that of the old beat reporter," Young said.

"That's something special and we're not going to see it again. We need more guys like that, he's a role model.



From left to right: Wilma Campbell, Plainfield Board of Education President, Anna Belin-Pyles, Superintendent of Schools, Harry Frezza, and Emily Morgan, School Board Member stand together for a photo. (Photo: Mary Iuvone/Correspondent)

"His coverage is the type of thing that makes kids come back to their community," Young added. "Some of these kids were never noticed before, and that made them work harder and go do something with their lives. Some of them became cops, some with the fire department. They came back and worked in the Plainfield community, and that's what we're trying to push here now — not just wrestling. We're building a much bigger and better place in steps, and that's what Harry represents."

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