



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

## NEWS RELEASE

### **New Mexico's Dana Pappas to Join NFHS Staff Theresa Wynns to Retire After 50-year Career in Education Lindsey Atkinson, Julie Cochran Take on New Sports**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Bruce Howard

INDIANAPOLIS, IN (July 22, 2021) — **Dana Pappas**, deputy director and commissioner of officials of the New Mexico Activities Association (NMAA), will join the staff of the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) August 1 as Director of Officiating Services – a newly designed staff position devoted to officials programming, services and courses.

**Theresa Wynns**, who has served as NFHS director of sports and officials education since 2012, will retire July 31 after a 50-year career in education at the local, state and national levels. In addition to previously handling the sport of softball, Wynns has been the staff liaison and rules editor for basketball and soccer.

**Lindsey Atkinson**, NFHS director of sports/communications associate, will be the new staff liaison/rules editor for basketball, and **Julie Cochran**, NFHS director of sports, will be the new staff liaison/rules editor for the sport of soccer.

Pappas has worked directly with the New Mexico Officials Association (NMOA) for the entirety of her 24-year career with the NMAA and has been commissioner of officials since 2004. In 2012, she assumed the additional role of NMAA deputy director.

As commissioner of officials for the NMAA, Pappas oversees the training and education programs for more than 1,700 interscholastic sports officials in 10 sports. She also oversees the assignment of officials for all postseason contests in baseball, basketball, football, soccer, softball, volleyball and wrestling. In addition, Pappas coordinates the NMOA state clinic each summer, which hosts clinicians from across the country and more than 600 officials from across the state.

In addition to her administration of officials, Pappas is the event director for state contests in band and choir, and she is the staff liaison for English Expo, Music, Scholastic Publications and Student Council.

Pappas' involvement in national officiating organizations and relationships with officials and administrators at all levels has been extensive. She is a member of the National Association of Sports Officials (NASO) Board of Directors and is chair of the NASO Recruitment and Retention Committee. She is in her second term as chair of the NFHS Officials Advisory Committee and served four years on the NFHS Officials' Quarterly Publications Committee.

In addition to speaking at several NFHS and NASO national meetings, Pappas was the keynote speaker at the 2016 Alabama Officials Association State Conference, and, in 2014, the NMOA, under Pappas' guidance, hosted the NASO Summit. In 2019, Pappas received the NFHS Citation for Officiating.

Pappas received her bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of New Mexico, and she earned her Certified Athletic Administrator (CAA) certification from the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA) in 2010.

"Dana has a long and successful history of growing and sustaining officials programs in New Mexico, and we are excited about the potential to elevate the status of officials nationally and accelerate our efforts to recruit and retain more officials nationally for high school sports," said Dr. Karissa Niehoff, NFHS executive director. "She has forged relationships with leaders in officiating at all levels, and she brings great energy to this new position devoted to officials programs."

Wynns, who has directed the NFHS Officials Association and the Officials Education Program the past nine years, has been national rules editor for basketball throughout her tenure as well. She was responsible for softball for three years and has been the staff liaison for soccer the past seven years.

Before joining the NFHS staff in the summer of 2012, Wynns had an outstanding 41-year career in education in the state of Indiana as a teacher, coach, dean of student services, assistant principal,

principal and state association administrator. She was a teacher and coach for 10 years with the Indianapolis Public Schools, and then served in a number of positions for 16 years in the Warren Township Schools in Indianapolis.

From 1997 until she joined the NFHS in 2012, Wynns was assistant commissioner of the Indiana High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) in Indianapolis. Wynns was IHSAA administrator for basketball and director of the IHSAA Officials Department for 14 years. She also was responsible for boys and girls soccer, and boys and girls tennis.

A licensed official for 19 years, Wynns dedicated her early career to officiating basketball, swimming, volleyball, and track and field. She worked three state finals in volleyball and six state finals in girls basketball. Wynns officiated the IHSAA girls state basketball championship games in 1977, 1981 and 1985. Wynns was named Indiana's outstanding girls basketball official in 1983 by the IHSAA and the NFHS Officials Association. In 2009, Wynns received the Silver Medal Award from the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame and the NFHS Citation for State Associations.

"We want to congratulate Theresia on an outstanding 50 years in education, and for her contributions the past nine years as a rules editor and heading our officials education program," Niehoff said.

Atkinson will add basketball to her list of sports responsibilities, which also includes volleyball, girls lacrosse and tennis. She serves on the NFHS Diversity/Equity/Inclusion Team, the Inclusion of Students with Disabilities Team and the Women's Leadership Team, and she is a writer in the Publications/Communications Department.

Atkinson rejoined the NFHS staff in 2016 as coordinator of sports after serving in a similar role from 2006 to 2008. In 2017, she was named to her current position of director of sports/communications associate.

In 2008, Atkinson joined the teaching staff at South Putnam Middle School/High School in Greencastle, Indiana. She was a health teacher for five years and held various coaching positions, including two years as varsity volleyball coach at South Putnam High School. She also organized the elementary girls basketball program and was assistant girls softball coach. During her time as head volleyball coach, Atkinson led her squad to the Putnam County championship in 2009.

In addition to her bachelor's degree from DePauw University in Greencastle, Atkinson earned her teaching certification from Marian College in Indianapolis and her master's degree from Kaplan

University in Indianapolis. She is a Registered Athletic Administrator (RAA) with the NIAAA and a Certified Interscholastic Coach (CIC) with the NFHS.

Cochran will add soccer to her sports responsibilities, which include cross country, track and field, field hockey and girls gymnastics. She also works with middle school programs, and she serves on the NFHS Diversity/Equity/Inclusion Team, the Inclusion of Students with Disabilities Team and the Women's Leadership Team.

Prior to joining the NFHS staff in 2017, Cochran was assistant executive director of the Illinois Elementary School Association (IESA) in Bloomington, Illinois, for 16 years. She was administrator for the activities of track and field, golf, volleyball and music for the IESA, which governs competition in several sports and activities for more than 800 elementary and middle schools in Illinois. She also had assumed responsibility for the emerging sports of boys volleyball and soccer.

In 1995, Cochran joined the athletic department staff at Illinois State University as athletic event manager, where she was responsible for organizing, staffing and managing all home events for 19 varsity sports. In 1998, her duties were expanded to include director of Redbird Arena on the Illinois State campus, and she remained in that position until joining the IESA staff in 2001.

Cochran is a graduate of the College of Wooster in Ohio, where she was a four-year starter on the women's soccer team. She began her professional career in 1994 as athletic marketing and promotions assistant at the University of Louisville. Cochran then earned her master's degree a year later from Temple University in Philadelphia.

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#### **About the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)**

The NFHS, based in Indianapolis, Indiana, is the national leadership organization for high school sports and performing arts activities. Since 1920, the NFHS has led the development of education-based interscholastic sports and performing arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NFHS sets direction for the future by building awareness and support, improving the participation experience, establishing consistent standards and rules for competition, and helping those who oversee high school sports and activities. The NFHS writes playing rules for 17 sports for boys and girls at the high school level. Through its 50 member state associations and the District of Columbia, the NFHS reaches more than 19,500 high schools and 12 million participants in high school activity programs, including more than 7.9 million in high school sports. As the recognized national authority on interscholastic activity programs, the NFHS conducts national meetings; sanctions interstate events; offers online publications and services for high school coaches and officials; sponsors

professional organizations for high school coaches, officials, speech and debate coaches, and music adjudicators; serves as the national source for interscholastic coach training; and serves as a national information resource of interscholastic athletics and activities. For more information, visit the NFHS website at [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org).

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