



Jumper Leggio '53



Gombatista “Jumper” Leggio, a legend not only in the Bay Shore-Brightwaters community but also across the United States, is a native born, second-generation bricklayer, one of twelve children, who has brought renown to our schools. A mason for the school district and now retired, he brought to Bay Shore much more than his skills as a bricklayer; he also brought with him an intense interest in the district and the community, and a commitment to the students, especially those who loved wrestling.

“Jumper” began wrestling as a seventh grader and became one of the best wrestlers on Long Island, winning the Suffolk County Championship and taking second in the Long Island championships several times. Upon graduation from high school, he enlisted in the United States Navy and was the All-Navy champion from 1953-1957 and he also won the Interservice (Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines) championships four consecutive years.

Upon his honorable discharge from the Navy, “Jumper” continued to wrestle and win at the local, state, national, and international level. In 1960, he was a contender for the United States Olympic team, but was set back because of an injury to his back that occurred while at work. While in Oregon at the national championships, he observed a KID wrestling practice and decided to commence such a program in Bay Shore.

Known as the “Father of KID Wrestling” in New York State, he organized the charter for Bay Shore KID wrestling with Bill Knapp, a charter that was later used by the United States Wrestling Federation to organize youth wrestling clubs across the country. “Jumper” also refereed wrestling meets and advanced to the point where he worked the Olympic trials in 1964 as well as the Pan American Games and the national championships.

“Jumper’s” tireless work in the promotion of KID wrestling led him to be named “Man of the Year” in New York State by the United States Wrestling Federation and today the Suffolk County KID wrestling championships are named in his honor. In 1987, the Suffolk County Wrestling Coaches Association honored him with the Grand Master Award in recognition of his many decades of service to the youth of this county. In 1997, he was inducted into The National Hall of Fame of Wrestling in Oklahoma. The recipient of numerous other awards and accolades, Jumper was also named “Mr. Bay Shore” for his work in the community.