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P.O. Box 915671 • Longwood, Florida • 32791

February 26, 2018

Attn:

George L. Hanbury II, Ph.D., President, Nova Southeastern University
Michael Mominey, Director of Athletics, Nova Southeastern University
3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, Florida
33314

Dear President Hanbury and Mr. Mominey:

I write you today with a heavy heart -- one torn with anger and sadness, but also pride.

As an alumnus and former employee of Nova Southeastern University, as well as former Broward County resident for 35 years, I [and my family] watched from afar the news of the horrific mass shooting that took place at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School this past Valentine's Day.

I was pleased to see, Mr. President, your communication that was sent out to NSU students, faculty, staff and alumni, re: grief and support services for all members of the extended NSU family, as well as the communities of South Florida.

Within hours of the tragedy in Parkland, news of respective acts of heroism began being shared and reported. And amidst those acts, two names familiar to NSU shone brightly: Coral Springs Police sergeant Jeff Heinrich and Douglas High School teacher, assistant athletic director, and girls' basketball coach Marilyn Rule-Heinrich.

It was May of 1998 when the Nova Southeastern University community first heard of Marilyn Rule-Heinrich and Jeff Heinrich. Then just 28-years-old, Marilyn was named the first-ever head coach of the newly-formed NSU women's basketball team. She was a local prodigy, having starred a decade earlier at Taravella High School before gaining her initial coaching experience as head coach of the Coral Springs High School girls' basketball team.

When the NSU program's inaugural season began that November, Marilyn brought along a familiar face to the bench as a volunteer assistant -- her husband, Jeff.

Marilyn would spend the next 12 years leading the NSU Knights/Sharks, with Jeff being a presence for practices and games when his off-duty schedule allowed.

As NSU's assistant athletic director for sports information at that time, I had the opportunity -- and the pleasure -- of working directly alongside the two. They were the nicest couple, the kindest couple, and the most knowledgeable basketball couple. They quickly earned the respect of their players, their peers at NSU, and their peers throughout the Florida Sun Conference. They played to win, but, more importantly, cared for their student-athletes.

So it was no surprise to learn of their heroics on that fateful day earlier this month.

As the murderer made his way through the halls of Stoneman Douglas, Marilyn helped protect 62 students and two teachers while gathering in a classroom, locking the door behind them, waiting for help to arrive.

Jeff, who just one year earlier stopped a shooting from occurring at Taravella High School, helped treat an injured student, and then entered the school to protect students and hunt for the killer.

Seventeen innocent lives were lost that day. If not for the actions of Marilyn Rule and Jeff Heinrich, that number might have been higher.

As a former South Floridian, I am grateful for the women and men -- the first responders, be them officers or teachers -- who sprang into action to try and protect our children.

But as an NSU Knight, I beam with pride at reading, watching, and knowing of the heroic actions of Marilyn Rule-Heinrich and Jeff Heinrich.

President Hanbury and Mr. Mominey, I ask you to join me -- and the rest of the NSU community -- in recognizing this amazing NSU couple. And as such, I encourage -- and ask of -- you to consider creating a "community hero" award in their name. One that is not a direct correlation to any NSU academic school, college, or program, but, rather, one that recognizes NSU students, faculty, staff, or alumni selfless acts that not necessarily and/or solely benefit NSU, but benefit South Florida and beyond.

Marilyn Rule-Heinrich and Jeff Heinrich deserve a place in the NSU Athletic Hall of Fame -- not just for athletic and coaching achievements, but for setting a human standard that all student-athletes, coaches, and administrators should strive for.

And they deserve to be recognized community-wide as part of the NSU Celebration of Excellence -- not just for admirably representing NSU for the 12 years they did, but for truly defining the word "excellence" by way of their own selfless actions.

I thank you for your attention and consideration to this request.

Yours truly,



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