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## **A Family Effort: Former Cedarville Standout, Dad Volley Coaching Duties**

**CEDARVILLE, OHIO** -- For former Cedarville University standout Annie (Lohrenz) Hilden, volleyball has always been a family affair. But this year, she and her dad, Stuart Lohrenz, have joined forces as co-coaches at Annie's alma mater, Rockford Christian School in Rockford, Illinois.

Hilden is a self-described gym-rat, growing up around sports and tagging along to her dad's coaching practices. Lohrenz coached volleyball at Rockford Christian before stepping down in 2004 so he could see his daughter play at Cedarville. Hilden played from 2003-2007 and was a right-side hitter on two National Christian College Athletic Association national champion teams, as well as co-captain of the team her senior year.

"I started staying after school for dad's practices in kindergarten," said Hilden. "I joined a school team in fifth grade and have been involved in volleyball ever since."

"I started coaching volleyball around the time Annie was born," said Lohrenz. "She was constantly with me in the gym and watching practices. She started playing so young and could overhand serve a volleyball in second grade!"

After years of playing club volleyball and on Rockford Christian's varsity volleyball team in high school, Hilden went on to play varsity volleyball for Cedarville University's Lady Jacket team under coach Teresa Clark until her retirement in 2007 and then Melissa (Hartman) Brown.

Hilden remembers her time as a Lady Jacket as formative, not only as a volleyball player but in her faith.

"It is truly unique to be in an environment where the coaches care about you, where your teammates become a family," said Hilden. "I had a coach that cared about my spiritual well-being alongside my game. I have vivid memories of Coach Hartman telling us that our conditioning drills were character building, that they were building endurance for the nights we would have to be up with our children. Now that I am a mom of four, I know that she was completely right!"

And that experience, one of both successful coaching on court and Christian mentorship off court, is something Hilden models in her own coaching career. After graduating in 2007, Hilden and her husband, Peter, moved to Texas, where she coached high school volleyball for two years until their move to Rockford in 2010.

For Lohrenz, his coaching history is extensive.

“I have coached 57 seasons at Rockford Christian,” said Lohrenz. “I coached volleyball until Annie was in college and then retired so that I could spend more time watching her play. I also started coaching discus for track and field when my son was in high school, so I have always been really involved in my children’s athletics.”

Despite his retirement after 40 years of teaching at Rockford Christian in 2020, Lohrenz has returned to coach volleyball after a 16-year hiatus from the sport.

“The school reached out to me this past summer because they needed a coach for high school volleyball,” said Lohrenz. “I said I would only do it if I could co-coach with Annie.”

For Hilden and Lohrenz, they began coaching with no shortage of difficulty.

“The team is relatively young, and we are in an extremely competitive conference,” said Hilden. “COVID made the last season difficult. But the girls are all incredibly hard workers with great attitudes. I am excited to see how they grow in the next few years and am lucky to be along for the ride.”

“Co-coaching has been a wonderful experience,” said Lohrenz. “Annie and I each have different strengths that we bring to the team, and it has helped us to succeed on the court as well as in personal relationships with the team.”

“My dad and I have always had a very open and honest relationship,” said Hilden. “So, co-coaching with him was just an extension of the relationship we have always had. It has been an easy process and I think we work well together.”

But, as Lohrenz describes, the new coaching job is truly a team effort.

“My wife has been a wonderful help watching Annie’s kids so she can help coach,” said Lohrenz. “Without her help, Annie and I would not have this opportunity to coach together.”

But for Hilden and Lohrenz, coaching volleyball is more than a family reunion.

“Volleyball ends,” said Hilden, “but the character you build on the court is forever. Volleyball is about building perseverance and endurance. It is not about the wins; it is about honoring God and being righteous before Him.”

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,715 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is one of the largest private universities in Ohio, recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, strong graduation, and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and high student engagement ranking. For more information about the University, visit [cedarville.edu](http://cedarville.edu).

Written by Halle Johnson