

NAYS YOUTH SPORTS ADVOCATE

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Better Sports for Kids Quality Program Provider designation introduced

Today's youth sports climate overflows with programming, making it challenging for organizations to stand out among the crowd, and difficult for parents to gauge which ones can deliver high-quality experiences for young athletes.

To help organizations and families, the National Alliance for Youth Sports (NAYS) has unveiled the **Better Sports for Kids Quality Program Provider** designation.

Like the Good Housekeeping Seal given to household products that meet high standards, this Quality Program Provider designation recognizes those organizations that have met an equally high standard when it comes to administering youth sports programming. Any organization can apply to be evaluated for the designation, and no cost is involved.

"Parents typically have lots of questions and valid concerns when deciding where to enroll their child," says John Eng, executive director of NAYS. "We have taken the guesswork out of this important time in a young person's life. When parents see that a program has the Quality Program Provider designation they will know that we have already asked all the tough questions that they may not have even considered or perhaps were afraid of bringing up."

Additionally, the designation enables organizations to showcase the quality of its programs and highlight the benefits of children being involved in its offerings.

"Our department recognizes that we have to actively demonstrate that we are providing the very best youth sports programs that meet all the needs of children in our community," says Rance Gaede, recreation supervisor for the City of Tamarac (Fla.). "Parents have many choices when it comes to youth sports, so the **Better Sports for Kids Quality Program Provider** designation is an important promotional tool to allow our city to set ourselves apart from the rest. Plus, it gives parents confidence in our programs since they can feel secure that their child is getting the chance to participate in a high-quality program and develop valuable life skills in the process."

A youth sports program earns the **Better Sports For Kids Quality Program Provider** designation if it fulfills all the components associated with these five key requirements:

- Written Policies and Procedures
- Volunteer Screening
- Coach Training
- Parent Education
- Accountability



Within each of these five areas are important details that can sabotage experiences and ruin young lives that organizations must prove they address in order to earn the designation, such as if written policies exist regarding playing time; if concussion awareness information is disseminated to coaches; if volunteers are subject to background checks and social security number verification; if the organization has a system for receiving and responding to complaints; if the organization solicits feedback to evaluate programs; and more.

"Organizations that earn this designation will stand out within their community for demonstrating that they have taken a proactive approach on some tough issues and are providing youth sports programs of the highest standard," Eng says. "Parents have a lot of genuine concerns these days and when they see the **Better Sports for Kids Quality Program Provider** designation they can take comfort knowing their child is in the best place possible to learn and compete in sports."

Anyone interested in having their organization evaluated for the **Better Sports for Kids Quality Program Provider** designation can visit nays.org/quality; email nays@nays.org; or call (800) 729-2057. ■



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NAYS
National Alliance
for Youth Sports

FREE NEW PROGRAM: Teaching Teens About Healthy Relationships

Teen dating violence is an epidemic:

one in three girls is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner; one in 10 high school students has been purposefully hit, slapped or physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend; and only one out of three teens who is in an abusive relationship ever tells anyone about it.

Plus, the list of well-known professional athletes physically abusing and mistreating their partners is long, and unfortunately continues to grow, which sends disturbing messages to today's youth.

Volunteer coaches are in a unique position to help. While it's a topic that may not be on a coach's radar, by taking the time to address healthy relationships with players a coach's influence on young lives and how they choose to treat others as adults can be significant.

To assist, NAYS has introduced **Teaching Teens About Healthy Relationships**. This FREE online program features sections covering:

- **A Coach's Role**
- **Understanding Teen Dating Violence**
- **Defining Healthy Relationships**
- **Recognizing Problems**
- **Team Tips: Talking to Your Players**
- **Additional Resources**

Many of the sections feature video clips with Dr. Asia Eaton, an assistant professor in Psychology and Women's and Gender Studies at Florida International University; and Dr. Dionne Stephens, an associate professor in the Department of Psychology's Developmental Program at Florida International University.

The tips and insight provided throughout this training will be invaluable for coaches as they navigate their seasons and have conversations with their players about these important topics and issues that will resonate with young athletes for the rest of their lives.

FREE ADDITIONAL TRAININGS

NAYS provides a variety of FREE online training programs, so if you haven't had a chance check these out:

CONCUSSION AWARENESS: Both concussion awareness – and prevention – is important in youth sports today as it affects the health and well-being of children participating in all sports, and at all levels. This training features information on recognizing the signs and symptoms associated with concussions, the keys to minimizing the risks of young athletes sustaining a concussion, steps for dealing with a suspected concussion, and more.



COACHING CHILDREN WITH MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES: When you volunteered as a youth sports coach you did so with the understanding that you have an important responsibility to meet the needs of all of the kids on your team – the super talented, the uncoordinated, the shy and those who may be dealing with a mental health issue that challenges their ability to function at the same level as many of their teammates. This program provides valuable information on coaching children who are dealing with issues such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Tourette syndrome, depression and many other types of disorders.

BULLYING PREVENTION: Bullying is an important issue that affects the health and well-being of children participating in all sports, and at all age ranges and levels. This program provides valuable information on preventing bullying, recognizing it when it does occur, and the appropriate steps to take to respond when it happens.

PROTECTING AGAINST ABUSE: This training features information on protecting you and your athletes during activities, as well as dealing with abuse and its many forms when it does occur. In the wake of the horrific abuse Larry Nassar inflicted on young gymnasts, it has become more important than ever to take every step possible to ensure the safety and well-being of young athletes in all sports. ■



NAYS COACH OF THE YEAR: MATTHEW SZABAN

Parents with children participating in sports programs at Joint Base McGuire Dix Lakehurst in New Jersey regularly requested Matthew Szaban as a coach during his time there.

And it's easy to see why.

The long-time volunteer coach has a heart of gold and a passion for teaching, molding and inspiring kids to be great not only in sports, but life.

"For me it's about seeing that enjoyment in the kids," Szaban says. "Whether it's my children, a neighbor or a stranger, it's about seeing that change from the beginning to the end of the season and seeing their growth as an athlete and as a member of the community."

Through the years he has coached flag and tackle football, track, basketball, t-ball, baseball and soccer. "I coach anything," he says. "If you need a coach and you send me an email and I have the time and my family has the time, I'm there because it's about the kids."

His practices are challenging and filled with fun. He stresses the fundamentals, working hard, knowing the rules and competing as a team.

Some things you won't see at his practices: kids bored, standing around and being ignored. "You have to keep everybody engaged,"

he says. "It doesn't matter if you have eight kids on your roster or you have 30 kids on your roster, keep everybody engaged throughout practice so that nobody feels left out. It's so important to keep everybody moving and make sure everyone is getting attention."

He's also known for lacing up his cleats sometimes and participating in drills with the kids. "I definitely get a kick out of it and they do, too," he says.

And his work away from the field is equally impressive. He was in the U.S. Air Force for 12 years, where he served in Iraq and Afghanistan, before retiring due to medical reasons. A devoted husband and father of 3, he also somehow finds the

time to volunteer at a Veterans hospital, a Ronald McDonald House and at local schools where he tutors children having difficulty with their studies. He also enjoys mentoring new coaches where he can share his knowledge and experience gained from more than a decade of coaching kids in a variety of sports.

"I love mentoring other coaches," he says. "I've been coaching for 11 years and teaching and mentoring has always been a strong suit of mine and that's what I love doing." ■



NAYS PARENT OF THE YEAR: JONATHON WASHINGTON

Whenever there's a youth sports activity taking place at MacDill Air Force Base Youth Programs in Florida, Jonathon Washington will likely be involved.

The single parent of a teenage daughter and pre-teen son, he tirelessly gives his time to help children and the sports programs any way he can, all while serving on active duty.

"Being out there with my kids and being able to help out the base community with whatever is needed is so rewarding," Washington says.

He volunteers to help prepare and maintain the base's soccer, flag football and baseball fields and he served as the soccer commissioner this past season for the program's 200 participants.

Plus, he's always lending a hand at the base's Youth Center, where he assists with daily tasks, speaks with youth and even is often found sticking around for hours playing games with the children there.

"Growing up I had a lot of people who put in a lot of time and a lot of effort," Washington recalls. "So, I look at it that this is my community and I have an opportunity to give back, so I am grateful for that."

Washington points to communication as the key for making youth sports programs work. The better those communication lines are between coaches and parents the more likely the youngsters participating will have rewarding experiences.

Washington has instilled in his children the value of helping others and being difference makers within the community, which they have embraced by visiting with the elderly, reading to young kids and participating in clean-up projects.

"I get one chance at being a dad to my kids and being able to make an impact in the community," Washington says.

He's clearly making the most of that chance – and his children and so many others in the community are reaping the benefits. ■



Meet the 2017 Excellence in Youth Sports Award winners

Each year the National Alliance for Youth Sports presents the prestigious Excellence in Youth Sports Awards, which honor organizations that are doing superior jobs of conducting diverse activities that focus on providing safe and positive experiences for all participants. The Excellence Awards were created by *Athletic Business* magazine and NAYS, and this year's recipients were honored during the annual Youth Sports Congress in Orlando, Fla.

NATIONAL TRAIL PARKS AND RECREATION DISTRICT



Miste Adams and Penny Dunbar

At the National Trail Parks and Recreation District in Springfield, Ohio the staff conducts its youth sports programs with a Kids' First philosophy. And youngsters are reaping the benefits with fun-filled experiences.

"We have a staff of two full-time Certified Youth Sports Administrator (CYSAs) employees along with volunteers and a small support staff to organize and implement youth sports programs," says Miste Adams, Recreation Superintendent. "This small but mighty team works tirelessly to provide the thousands of kids in our area and surrounding areas with the best youth sporting experience. We pride ourselves on being the leader and go-to group in the youth sports community."

Soccer is the department's most popular sport, as more than 700 youngsters take the field in the fall, and more than 350 participate in the spring. Plus, there are plenty of other sports to choose from throughout the year, including volleyball, basketball, flag football and tennis.

The department also conducted highly successful Start Smart Basketball and Baseball programs this year to give youngsters ages 3 to 5 a positive introduction to the sport and set the tone for a smooth transition into organized sports.

It also offers its Youth Sport Sampler, an innovative week-long, camp style program for kids ages 5 to 7. The unique format focuses on a different sport each day, giving kids the chance to try a new sport or play one that they haven't been able to due to their commitments with other sports or activities.

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM



Brittany Bigham

No matter the sport youngsters are participating in at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam Youth Sports and Fitness in Hawaii, rest assured they'll have positive and well-rounded experiences.

And, thanks to some program enhancements, they'll also be able to transition into school sports, too.

"Our organization went through a re-structure and this started with the structure of our team and individual sports calendar," says Brittany Bigham, Youth Sports and Fitness Coordinator at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam Youth Sports and Fitness. "Our sports calendar now goes opposite of the local school and league sports schedule. This allows our youth to participate in our developmental program and then try out and participate in their school or outside league teams. This reflects the progressive aspect of our structure."

The base offers a variety of sports for kids to choose from, including soccer, volleyball,

basketball, baseball, cheerleading and track and field. It also runs popular Start Smart programs for soccer, baseball, football and basketball and offers camps and clinics for everything from golf and archery to BMX and flag football.

Another structural change within the department is what it's focusing on regarding each particular age group.

"Once the youth have a grasp of basic motor skills we build to skill development, to organized play, and to wrap it all up with skill enhancement and skill enrichment," Bigham says. "This is all broken down into each age group. Our 5-6 year olds is strictly motor skill development; our 7-8 age group is motor skill development and sport specific skill development; our 9-10 age group is motor skill development, sport specific skill development and now organized play; and then our 11-18 age group is skill enhancement and skill enrichment, which encompasses all the previous steps."

HURLBURT FIELD YOUTH SPORTS PROGRAM



Alvin Kopusko

The Hurlburt Field Youth Sports Program staff in Florida delivers on its "Having Fun with a Purpose" motto every single day. And the youngsters that annually participate in its programs are clearly reaping the benefits.



“Our motto is ‘Having Fun with a Purpose’ in everything we do so that we can provide the knowledge and skills needed for our young youth to thrive,” says Alvin Kopusko, Sports and Fitness Director at Hurlburt. “The philosophy of the Hurlburt Field Youth Sports Program is to instill a positive attitude, sportsmanship, basic fundamentals, confidence and high moral standards.”

Plus, it educates youngsters on its nine Core Values, which are Honesty, Integrity, Sportsmanship, Respect, Confidence, Responsibility, Perseverance, Courtesy and Judgement. These Core Values are incorporated throughout Hurlburt’s sports programs, which include everything from basketball and swimming to volleyball and cheerleading, among many other activities. These core values reflect the desire to live a responsible life as an individual, as a member of a team, and as a member of society.

Parents are also encouraged to reinforce these behaviors by talking about them, what they mean and what these behaviors can look like at home.

“Our programs develop the physical, psychological and social aspects of youth,” Kopusko says. “Our programs emphasize participation, fun with a purpose and sportsmanship, and downplay a competitive approach to sports. Participants, parents and coaches are expected to support this philosophy.”

FORT SILL CYS YOUTH SPORTS AND FITNESS



Kelsee Mullings

At Fort Sill CYS Youth Sports and Fitness in Oklahoma there’s certainly something for

everyone when it comes to its youth sports programming, thanks to a creative staff that continually finds ways to keep kids active, engaged and having fun.

“Our philosophy is that if you make the sport fun now at these early ages, the children will associate these activities with fun and continue to enjoy them and work hard as they mature and refine their skills,” says Kelsee Mullings, Youth Sports and Fitness Assistant Director at Fort Sill. “With our league being an educational, non-competitive league, we believe that the environment created is for optimal learning while having fun and the skills learned here will apply to all aspects of life.”

Along with offering opportunities for youngsters to participate in team sports like baseball, softball, soccer, volleyball and flag football, there are lots of other neat activities offered throughout the year. For instance, a variety of summer sports camps are conducted that are designed to teach the sport and spark an interest in the child. Camps include lacrosse, badminton, tennis, archery, inline hockey, golf, pickleball and racquetball.

The staff also offers a Speed and Agility Camp, which provides training that benefits adolescents and teaches exercises that they can do on their own time to stay active and improve their fitness levels. Middle and high school age kids can take advantage of a free nine-week weight training course, where they are shown proper gym safety, etiquette and techniques during twice-a-week sessions held at a nearby gym.

They also apply that innovative thinking in other areas. A couple times a month they visit Freedom Elementary, located on base, which has about 500 students.

“One to two times a month we take our Hop sports program there, which is a projector that puts them through various levels of activities like hip hop dance or karate,” Mullings says. “We utilize their P.E. time, allowing us to work with every grade.”

CITY OF HENDERSON



Julian Ramos, Andrea Ramirez, Julien Green and James DiNicola

When it comes to providing high-quality youth sports programs that kids will remember for a lifetime, the City of Henderson, Public Works, Parks and Recreation Department Sports Section in Nevada does it as well as anyone.

And James DiNicola, the Recreation Services Supervisor, knows as well as anyone how impactful the programs are because he’s benefited from them.

“I played youth sports in Henderson from 5 years old to high school, where my dad was able to coach me for several seasons,” DiNicola says. “After playing in college I came back to coach and work in Henderson, receiving my NAYS certification. After advancing my career, I became the Sports Supervisor, where I earned my Certified Youth Sports Administrator (CYSA) certification. I now have a 5- and 6-year-old who currently play in the Henderson youth sports leagues. Henderson sports has truly been a part of so many great memories for three generations of my family.”

Committed to ensuring that all children are treated to rewarding experiences the staff continually reviews its programs and ways they can be enhanced. It conducts program evaluations at the end of each league season with coaches and parents. A 1 to 5 scale is used for rating the registration process and registration fees; the team balance and overall program quality; the volunteer coaches and officials; the facilities and safety of the participants; the staff and league marketing; and the overall satisfaction with the program.

“We are continuously making improvements and adding new leagues and opportunities every chance we get,” DiNicola says. ■

Visit *SportingKid* Live today

Our **SPORTINGKID LIVE** site, which can be found at nays.org/sklive, is the best youth sports resource you'll find.

The content, changed daily, includes the latest news, research, trends, coaching and parenting tips, and so much more.

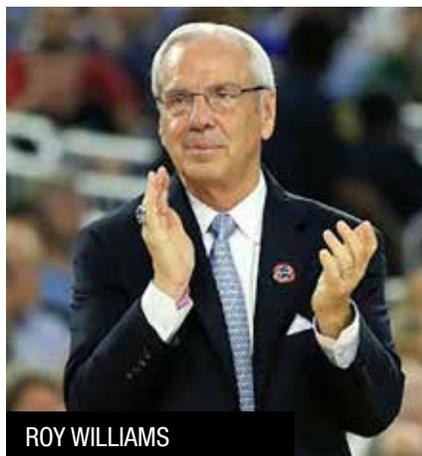
The top professional and collegiate coaches are sharing with us what you need to know to be a better coach, and a well-informed youth sports parent. All the stories are archived so the search tool can be used to locate any article that has appeared.

Here's a glance at some of the many who have shared their insights:

JOHN HARBAUGH: The Baltimore Ravens head coach on making sure young athletes have something positive from practice that

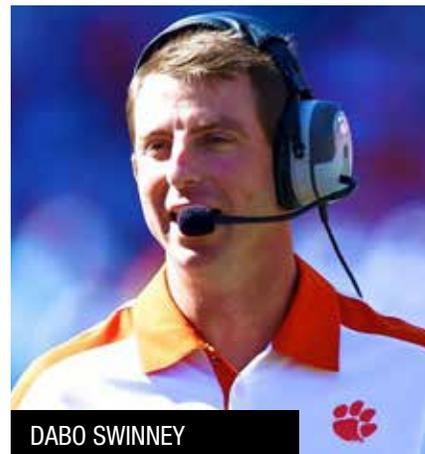
makes them feel good and that they can talk about with their family.

ROY WILLIAMS: The legendary North Carolina basketball coach on connecting with kids and being positive influences in their lives



ROY WILLIAMS

DABO SWINNEY: Clemson's football coach on the importance of being a coach your players will respect and play their hardest for.



DABO SWINNEY

NOMAR GARCIPARRA: Two-time batting champ and lifetime .313 hitter offers up tips to help kids excel at the plate

New NAYS Certified

Youth Sports Administrator

Congratulations to the following individuals who earned their Certified Youth Sports Administrator (CYSA) credential in 2017, joining more than 4,300 others worldwide, by completing the Academy for Youth Sports Administrators training program. These individuals are taking valuable steps to help make youth sports better in their community. 290 representing 40 states plus at least 12 military bases internationally

290 individuals representing 40 states, plus more than a dozen U.S. military bases internationally, earn the CYSA credential

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| Ina Cotton, AE | Shawna Figy, Ariz. | Charcato Scipio, Calif. | Elizabeth Leininger, Calif. | Elizabeth Ricci, Fla. | David Cuervo, Fla. |
| Rosellini Lime, AE | Richard Ortiz, Ariz. | Julie Webb, Calif. | Skip Wallace, Calif. | Joshua Anderson, Fla. | Kyle Rieffler, Fla. |
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NIKKI MCCRAY-PENSON: Two-time Olympic gold medalist and Old Dominion women's basketball coach on speaking to kids with passion



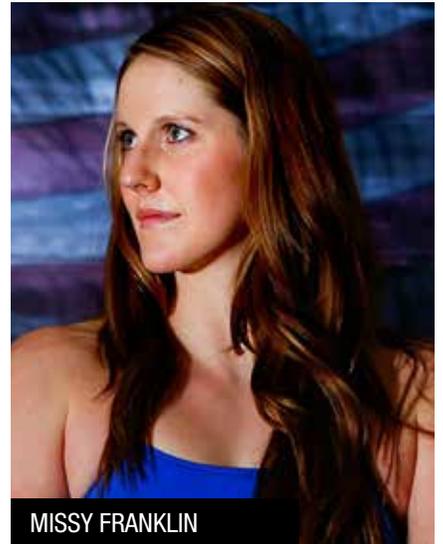
NIKKI MCCRAY-PENSON

CHRIS COLLINS: Impacting young lives through coaching with the Northwestern men's basketball coach

RAEGAN PEBLEY: The head women's basketball coach at Texas Christian University on erasing it's-all-about-me attitudes

JOSH WOLFF: Former U.S. Olympic and World Cup soccer star on how to build teams that play together and support each other.

PLUS: Embracing mistakes and chaos with U.S. women's Olympic volleyball coach **KARCH KIRALY** • practice tips from **JOHN WOODEN** • Crushing performance pressure with Olympic gymnast **SAMANTHA PESZEK** • sizing up stress • anxiety-busting techniques • coaching with compliments with pitching great **OREL HERSHISER** • overcoming mental blocks • dealing with mood swings • building all-around players • revving up practice fun with Baltimore Orioles manager **BUCK SHOWALTER** • Olympic swimming great **MISSY FRANKLIN** on savoring the effort, and more... ■



MISSY FRANKLIN

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| Paul Lundberg, Mary. | Bette Bigsby, Mich. | Anne Maher, N.H. | Jacob Hensel, Ohio | Andre Killkelley, S.D. | Melissa Moutry, Wisc. |
| Michael Lanni, Md. | Joseph Hawley, Mich. | Dan Maclean, N.H. | James Frommeyer, Ohio | Cory Richardson, S.D. | Jake Wilson, Wyo. |
| Matthew Duplisea, Maine | Janelle Compton, Mich. | Edward Wood, N.H. | Jason Beavon, Ohio | Julie Fike, Tenn. | James Hunter, Wyo. |

What's NEW on the NAYS Blog at **NAYS.ORG**

► Youth sports TED Talk Roundup

Recently, a staff member from a NAYS Member Organization, Buffalo Grove Park District (Ill.), presented “Sucking the fun out of youth sports” at a local, independent TEDx event in his community. He shares stories about his sports experiences, including one where he confronts a coach who is out of line. Over the years several speakers have shared youth sports related talks at TEDx events, and this is a roundup of some of them.

► Accomplishing goals and transforming lives

“We love and appreciate the Ready, Set, RUN! program,” says Nora Hana, the Expanded Learning Programs Coordinator in San Joaquin County in Northern California. “This is a hidden gem that not many people know about. It feels so good to see our kids accomplish something and feel good about it.”



»»» WANTED: Tell us what YOU are doing in your community

Would you like the outstanding work you, your staff or someone in your community is doing to be featured on NAYS.ORG?

We want to hear from you to be able to share your efforts with others. Send your story ideas to Greg Bach at gbach@nays.org