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NEWS RELEASE

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## AGUA FRIA FOOTBALL COACH REPRESENTS ARIZONA AT NFL EVENT

PHOENIX, AZ (July 23, 2009) – When Kelly Epley answered his telephone, he was surprised to hear who was on the other end.

It was an official from the Arizona Cardinals, who told Epley, the head football coach at Avondale Agua Fria, that he had been selected as the state representative for the National Football League's Youth Summit, to be held at Kent State University in Ohio on July 29 and 30.

Epley's first reaction was, "Will I be back in time for the start of football practice (on Aug. 3)? I'm not sure I want to miss any time."

But within seconds, his next reaction was, "When am I going to do this again – ever?"

So Epley packed his bags and was ready for the adventure that was to include a reception and dinner at the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio and the two-day conference at the university.

Epley consulted a few Arizona coaches who had the honor in recent years, including Prescott Valley Bradshaw Mountain's Chuck Apap and Chandler Basha's Tim McBurney.

"They said it is very worthwhile," Epley said. "I was flabbergasted and flattered. I want to represent Arizona the way it should be."

Speakers were expected to range from the pro level all the way down to high school and youth levels.

"That's where you want to cultivate the game, is at the high school and youth levels," Epley said. "Football is losing some kids, to a degree, to other sports where the cost factor is less."

There are many youth leagues nowadays, he added, including Pop Warner, "where you can see a football game pretty much year-round if you like."

All the proper techniques were expected to be covered at the Youth Summit. Another essential element would be stressing the importance of academics.

"We as high school coaches need to reach them (players) and the youth coaches do, too," Epley said. "Not all of the players have an idea of what is involved with academics and what it takes to remain eligible at the high school level. I've had some players (freshmen) come in who were never told about that, and we lost a few kids because of it. It is important not just now, but beyond high school because very few players ever reach the NFL."

Epley, meanwhile, remains optimistic about the play of Agua Fria in 2009.

"We've been pleased with the way things have gone so far (in spring practices and informal summer work). We are in a nice region and it should be competitive," he said.

Joining Agua Fria in the Class 4A Division I West Valley Region will be Bradshaw Mountain, Glendale Copper Canyon, El Mirage Dysart, Peoria, Glendale Raymond Kellis and Peoria Sunrise Mountain.

Epley has two promising sophomores who he expects to play significant roles.

They are Keith Huckaby Jr., a running back-safety and Leandre Vaughn, a running back-cornerback. Huckaby is the son of Keith Huckaby, a former star running back at Agua Fria who was *The Arizona Republic's* Player of the Year in 1989.

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