



**Arizona Interscholastic Association**  
7007 N. 18<sup>th</sup> St; Phoenix, AZ 85020  
602-385-3810; fax: 602-385-3779

---

## NEWS RELEASE

---

### **LIBERTY HIGH SENIORS HELP ATHLETES PURSUE VICTORY WITH HONOR**

PHOENIX, AZ (Oct. 19, 2009) – Athletes, coaches and parents at Peoria’s Liberty High School are not ones to allow grass to grow underneath their feet.

They have taken the initiative to build a tradition and a theme for all of the school’s athletes to live by.

Of 108 senior athletes, 96 attended a retreat in August to develop a plan. This is the first year for a senior class at the four-year-old school.

The result included a number of lists for athletes, coaches and teams to follow in terms of character, sportsmanship and general conduct.

“They have taken ownership in their school and we have begun and established what will be the foundations for Victory With Honor (program developed by the Arizona Interscholastic Association) at Liberty for future senior classes to come,” said Liberty athletic director Rick Johnson.

Johnson has been a coach and administrator in the Phoenix area for more than 30 years and he said the program at Liberty, with an enrollment of about 1,500, reminds him and many others of the type of spirit that schools used to have.

The plan was unveiled Oct. 15 at a breakfast honoring coaches in observance of National Coaches Day, created by the National Federation of State High School Associations.

The Liberty group had posters printed that list the objectives of athletes, coaches and teams. Parents also provided assistance with the retreat, the breakfast and working at the athletic events. The school also works with business partners Wells Fargo Bank, CORE Medical Group and Christianson Dental.

Objectives for athletes:

Never give up. Give 110 percent, leaving it all on the field. Respect everyone – opponents, teammates, teachers and coaches. Set the tone for our school. Are team players and unselfish. Are passionate. Support their teams and other teams, too. Lead by example. Make academics their first priority.

Objectives for coaches:

Exhibit good sportsmanship. Set high standards (for athletes). Push them to be the best they can be. Listen to them and lead them. Are passionate and committed. Hold them accountable. Are organized. Teach them lessons for life.

Objectives for teams:

Exhibit good sportsmanship. Promote school spirit. Promote community involvement. Win and lose gracefully. Show a spirit of unity in all things. Play by the rules. Provide positive leaders on campus. Play like champions every day.

“I love the idea,” said boys basketball coach Mark Wood. “The school has the right idea. When you invest in your senior leaders, the whole school jumps on board in terms of morale, discipline and ethics, you name it.

“It helps establish the character foundation for our school, teaching teachers and kids how to support, be it academics, athletics, everything. If every school did this, it would transform schools statewide.”

Among the athletes helping to develop the program was Amanda De Armond, who plays volleyball, basketball and softball.

“We started out with tons of ideas. You wouldn’t believe how many there were,” she said. “We had to cut the list down.

“We wanted to let everyone know what we expect from each other, both on and off the field. We as athletes always have been able to connect well, but this helps bring everybody closer.”

Liberty volleyball coach Courtney Orcutt said she was happy to participate and help the athletes.

“I think this is probably something that some schools lack,” she said. “It would be great if they could put something like this together. It can bring a whole school together, in all sports, not just those in the fall. It can help everyone.”

There are many parents who enjoy being involved. One of those is Mary Crespino, active in the booster clubs in support of her children who are athletes – Kyle, a senior (football and track) and Melissa, a junior (soccer).

“We’ve been building up to this every year. We want to help build a tradition,” Crespino said.

“When you sit down with these students, it’s amazing what they can come up with. They want people to listen to them.”

Crespino helps keep parents informed of support events, such as a community barbecue before a recent football game. She sends out e-mails to as many parents as possible, urging them to attend.

Johnson is confident that the program will result in a long-term commitment by the community.

### **Have a Story Idea:**

The AIA is looking for story ideas on member high schools, including its student-athlete, coaches and administrators. Have a story that you think should be shared with the AIA community? Email your idea to Don Ketchum at [dketchum@aiaonline.org](mailto:dketchum@aiaonline.org).