

AZ Giving: Positive Playing Fields

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It's no secret that raising children to be physically active and a good teammate will help them to be more successful in the future. One national nonprofit is bringing that belief close to home.



Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA) is affording local kids yet one more opportunity for physical fitness and sportsmanship as it develops a chapter in Phoenix with the help of Tom Lewis and the T.W. Lewis Foundation. "Like in other cities, there are kids in Phoenix who have had bad experiences with win-at-all-cost coaches and have dropped out of sports," says Jim Thompson, the founder and CEO of PCA. "Tom [Lewis] wanted the kids of his hometown to have the very best experience possible and that's what we intend to help make happen."

PCA works with schools and organizations to create a more positive environment in which young athletes can receive a character-building experience. Thompson says that the group's ultimate goal is to develop better community leaders while also making children better athletes and all-around better people. "We want every coach in the Phoenix area to be a Double-Goal Coach who prepares his or her team to win on the scoreboard while having the second, more important goal of using sports to teach life lessons," Thompson says. "We want every athlete to aspire to be a Triple-Impact Competitor who is committed to making self, teammates and the game better by the way he or she competes."

In the past, Thompson was a volunteer coach and was inspired to do something after seeing the negative relationships between coaches, parents and athletes. He found success by putting his beliefs on creating a more positive playing field to work, later writing books on building character through the "endless processions of teachable moments" in sports.

Today, PCA offers in-person and online trainings, books and other tools to help coaches work with their athletes. According to Thompson, the organization has helped numerous schools and programs nationwide including an independent school district in Houston which reported having no expulsions of players or coaches after working PCA principles into their curriculum. Another district in Dallas reported an increase in sportsmanship and treatment of opposing teams.

PCA is looking for locals to get involved with the new Phoenix chapter in order to expand the program to reach a larger audience. Thompson says PCA will be working with youth sporting programs that are already in place and will encourage current coaches to embrace PCA's mission statement of "becoming a movement to transform youth sports so sports can transform youth." "Our focus is on changing the entire model of how high school and youth sports are done. That's a big job, and we know we can't do it alone. We have to work with others to make it happen."

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Positive Coaching Alliance www.positivecoach.org.