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## Area coaches get #MeToo praise

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WEST CHESTER — Coaches from Chester County high schools who took part in an ongoing program to tackle the issue of violence against women were recently honored by the Chester County Domestic Violence center for their work during the last school year.

In the wake of the #MeToo movement, those coaches who agreed to participate in the Coaching Boys Into Men program provided a positive social response to the problem, using their positions to inspire, teach and influence boys and young men to reject further examples of abuse of women, a press release announcing the awards stated.

The program, which bills itself as the only evidence-based curricular program that trains and motivates high-school coaches to teach young male athletes healthy relationship skills, – has been running in some of Chester County's public high schools for two years, according to the Domestic Violence Center, headquartered in West Chester.

“Coaching Boys Into Men shows high school athletes that violence never equals strength,” explained center Director of Education Programs Amelia Rayburn during a ceremony held at West Chester University to honor the participating coaches. “We teach our girls time and time again they can be anything they want to be, from a princess to an astronaut, but we also need an empowerment

program for young men if we are really going to reduce relationship violence.”

ADVERTISING

The advertisement features the Charles Schwab logo at the top left with the tagline "Own your tomorrow." Below the logo is a large black and white photograph of Greg S., an independent advisor since 1993. To the right of Greg S. is a smaller black and white photograph of a smiling woman. At the bottom right of the advertisement, the text reads "Is your money in the right place?" followed by a small icon.

During the 2018-2019 school year, coaches from Bayard Rustin High School, West Chester East High School, Phoenixville Area High School, and Downingtown East High School continued their work with the program, and the center trained coaches from Coatesville Area Senior High and Conestoga High School to begin implementing it as well.

Coaches who received awards for their participation in the 2018-2019 Coaching Boys Into Men Program are: Shaz Brown of Bayard Rustin High School Boys' Track & Field; Matt Taglang of Bayard Rustin Boys' Cross-Country; John Alvanitakis of Bayard Rustin Freshman Football; Scott Stephen of West Chester East Football; John Gallo of West Chester East Wrestling; Donald Grinstead of Phoenixville Football; Eric Burnett of Phoenixville Basketball; and Tom Visser of Downingtown East Junior Varsity Basketball.

"It's natural for men, for male coaches in particular, to shy away from these issues," said Chris Lunardi, assistant principal at Bayard Rustin, and a member of the program's advisory board. "Yet these coaches blazed a trail that other coaches in the county have been able to follow to teach our kids about respect, integrity and nonviolence.

"The participating coaches in Chester County understand these values can and should be taught within the context of the aggressive, physical and competitive culture of interscholastic athletics," he added.

Lunardi was the first athletic director in the county's high school system to start teaching the curriculum with his coaches and athletes. As a result, he received the 2019 Pennsylvania Coalition

Against Domestic Violence Excellence in Male Leadership Award.

A full 100 percent of the athletes surveyed who participated in the program during the last school year recommend the program," stated the press release. The pre- and post-program surveys of the student-athletes also show significant, positive and data-driven outcomes, with notably more students reporting an ability to identify disrespectful and abusive behaviors as well as a willingness to intervene when witnessing abuse or disrespect.

At the ceremony, held June 28 at West Chester University, Joe Henson, the center's program coordinator, noted that he, like many others, grew up in a culture of "toxic masculinity" without realizing how his actions caused detriment to half the population.

"This program is undoing this for the next generation," he said. "And we're showing that the ability to treat people with respect is an integral part of leadership."

Those taking part in the event included Domestic Violence Center Board of Directors Matthew Holliday; county Commissioner Terrence Farrell; center Chief Executive Officer Dolly Wideman-Scott; and Phoenixville Community Health Foundation President Louis J. Beccaria.

"We are grateful so many school districts and administrators have embraced this program with open arms," said Holliday, who serves as the county's prothonotary. "I'm excited to see us working proactively in our community to prevent abuse. Anything we can do to prevent one less person from becoming a victim-survivor is worth its weight in gold."

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Michael P. Rellahan has been a staff reporter and editor at the Daily Local News since 1982. He has covered all kinds of news over the years but is now assigned to report on court and legal news, as well as Chester County government news and politics.