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Rockville High School Athletes Work to Enhance Sportsmanship and Community

VERNON, Connecticut – Athletes at Rockville High School are taking the lead in a new initiative that encourages sportsmanship, urges students and others to attend games and meets of the school's lesser known teams, and builds community throughout the school.

By making a Rockville High School a "Class Act School," students will be joining with other schools across the state and declaring their commitment to respect, teamwork and character.

"We are always trying to promote sportsmanship," Rockville High Athletic Director Jeffrey Farrell said.

To qualify for the program, and receive a Class Act School t-shirt, athletes and non-athletes agree to demonstrate teamwork, sportsmanship and discipline; show respect for coaches, teammates, opponents, officials and spectators; win and lose graciously; cheer for their team and not against an opponent; congratulate opponents in a sincere manner after a win or loss; and to be positive role models.

Already, more than 100 Rockville High students have signed the pledge to adhere to the guidelines and have received a Class Act t-shirt.

Members of the school's Student Athlete Leadership Team, also known as SALT, are advocating for the sportsmanship standards, but also see Class Act as an opportunity to build awareness about their school's lesser known teams. One way to highlight those teams, SALT members say, is to designate a game of the week and encourage students and the community to attend and support the team.

The Vernon Public Schools, in partnership with family and community, is committed to provide a quality education, with high expectations, in a safe environment where all students become independent learners and productive contributors to society.



The same model, students say, can be used to build awareness, attendance and appreciation of non-athletic events at Rockville High School.

“We want our community to be more involved,” said Weston LaBrecque, a senior who is president of SALT and plays basketball and runs track. Football and some other sports already draw sizeable crowds, but LaBrecque said he wants his fellow students and others to know that there is plenty of drama and enjoyment to be drawn from other games, matches and meets at Rockville High.

“It would be great if we could get that same kind of energy we see at football games, that home crowd energy, at other sports,” he said.

Cross country is just one example, he said. In meets at Rockville High, spectators see the runners pass by three times during a race and get a good sense of how the runners are battling each other for the lead.

“The finish of a cross country race can be amazing,” LaBrecque said. “The runners are tired, exhausted and really spent. But then you watch them dig down for that final burst of energy to go all out to push ahead of a competitor.”

Having a crowd watching a game is not only fun for the spectators, but can help energize the athletes, said Victoria Mitchell, vice president of SALT and a lacrosse player.

“We want to find a way to promote all of our sports because it’s a great way to build community and confidence in the athletes,” Mitchell said. “If you’re losing a lot and all you see is your parents there, that’s not as motivating as seeing a group of students watching you play. It builds confidence and friendships.”

Knowing that others care about your sport and the effort you and your teammates are making is a real boost, she said. “It means people care and that it’s not just all about the big sports or boys’ sports,” she said.

Lucy Skidgel, a sophomore who swims and is going out for track, knows all about being on a team that does not get much attention.

“Most people at school don’t know we have a swim team,” she said.

She and some of her colleagues on SALT see an opportunity to build awareness of not only sports, but other non-athletic program, such as vocational agriculture, music, drama and writing.

“This is a good start toward including everyone in the spirit of Rockville High School,” she said. “It’s a very inclusive space. There is a lot of team work here. It’s a nice energy compared to other schools.”

“Not everyone does a sport,” added Jocie Niemczyk, a junior swimmer. “People have other talents besides sports, such as art and music. Going to band concerts, school plays, that would show we are aware of what other students are doing.”

“It’s always nice to have spectators, someone watching you play or perform,” said Anaya Tolton, a senior. “I always enjoy when we have big crowds come to watch our game. The energy is infectious. And it brings the school together. You can watch your friend play, or with your friends to watch a game or performance.”

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