

For Immediate Release

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For More Information

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Coming to Kansas City...University of Notre Dame Program Aims to Transform the Culture of Sports.

Winning-at-all-cost coaching, sports specialization and parent “sports rage” are just a few of the problems occurring within the culture of sports today. The Institute for Educational Initiatives at the University of Notre Dame has developed a new approach. The Play Like A Champion Today® (PLC) educational series supports schools and sport leagues in promoting: athletics as ministry to youth and families, building teams as moral communities, character development, spiritual growth, intrinsic motivation and responsible decision-making.

The Institute designed the program to provide children with the highest quality sports experience possible. Drawing on the expertise of members of the Notre Dame coaching staff, the research of developmental and sport psychologists as well as leaders in Catholic ministry, PLC aims to transform youth sports by educating coaches and parents to nurture personal and spiritual development along with athletic excellence.

The CYO of Johnson & Wyandotte Counties will host the area’s first Play Like A Champion Today® workshops beginning this August. Youth sport coaches will hear the “champion” message throughout an interactive three hour workshop. Parents will also be required to attend a “Parent Like A Champion” workshop. University of Notre Dame PLC Program Director and former Notre Dame Cheerleader, Kristin Sheehan will be in Kansas City to conduct the workshops with local leadership, including CYO Executive Director Peter Piscitello. Piscitello and four of the CYO’s board members attended the Play Like A Champion Today® National Leadership Conference on Notre Dame’s campus this June to become introduced to the PLC philosophy.

The CYO of Johnson & Wyandotte Counties will hold four area workshops this August for coaches and four more for parents. Each coach will be required to attend a workshop prior to coaching and one parent per family will be required to attend the parent workshop. They will be held as follows:

Parent Workshops

- Monday, August 15th at St. James Academy (Commons Area) – 7:00pm
- Wednesday, August 17th at Bishop Ward High School (Gym) – 7:00pm
- Saturday, August 20th at St. Thomas Aquinas High School (Gym) – 1:00pm

- Sunday, August 21st at Bishop Miege High School (Gym) – 1:00pm

Coach Workshops

- Tuesday, August 23rd at St. James Academy (Media Center) – 7:00pm
- Wednesday, August 24th at Bishop Ward High School (Gym) – 7:00pm
- Saturday, August 27th at Bishop Miege High School (Auditorium) – 1:00pm
- Sunday, August 28th at St. Thomas Aquinas High School (Auditorium) – 1:00pm

Play Like A Champion Today® coach workshops are nationally accredited by NCACE, National Council for Accreditation of Coaching Education. PLC enjoys partnership with twenty-three Catholic dioceses and exists in over thirty cities across the United States and Canada. PLC has educated over 10,000 coaches and 3,000 parents who in turn have impacted the lives of over half a million athletes. PLC is excited to welcome in partnership the Johnson and Wyandotte CYO. One Diocese of Erie, PA coach commented about the program, “Play Like A Champion Today® emphasizes presenting sport as a form of youth ministry and challenges us to view sports as a means of developing the whole person: physically, mentally and spiritually. This is an exciting program that challenges the ‘win at all cost mentality’ currently draining the fun and excitement from youth sports participation.” Workshop evaluation data also confirms the effectiveness of the initiative. For example, 93% of coaches attending the clinic were satisfied with the experience while 92% agree that they will fully implement the PLC approach to coaching for character development. When asked about the impact of the workshop, sport parents strongly agreed that they would commit to being a more positive presence from the sidelines by avoiding coaching their child from the sidelines (86%). This was a 21% increase from before to after the PLC workshop.

The Institute’s own research on player, coach and fan behavior at youth sporting events documented unacceptable levels of unsportsmanlike and aggressive behavior. One might expect Catholic programs to fare better than their secular counterparts, but Notre Dame’s research indicates that in many respects, Catholic programs are worse.

“If Catholic-sponsored sports programs are going to achieve their full-potential as envisioned by Pope John Paul II, Catholic dioceses and parishes are going to have to invest in preparing coaches as educators.” says Dr. Clark Power, PLC Founder and Notre Dame Professor. “The Church has a long and proud history of preparing her ministers for service. Prior to attending a Play Like A Champion Today® Workshop, most coaches in Catholic sponsored sport programs never thought of themselves as youth ministers. After the workshop, most coaches have

not only bought into their ministerial role but feel that they can more effectively promote the highest values of sport.”

In addition to offering coach workshops, PLC offers the Parent Like A Champion Today® program, an interactive workshop for sport parents. The PLC Parent Workshop seeks not only to respond to all too frequent incidents of “sideline rage” but also seeks to give parents sound advice on how to guide their children through their youth and high school sport careers. Parents receive education and materials that help them reinforce the goals of character development through sport stressed by the PLC program. Parents also receive guidance on how they can help their children to form habits of spiritual reflection, perseverance, sound decision-making, team work, good nutrition and regular exercise.

For more information on Notre Dame’s Sports as Ministry Initiative, visit their website at www.playlikeachampion.org or you may contact them through email, plc@nd.edu or phone 574-631-9981.