

Media Release



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Respect in Sport to create positive, character-building experience for kids

With an eye on promoting better sportsmanship and coaching skills, this spring Rocky View Schools (RVS) and Foothills School Division (FSD) will be introducing a new coaching development initiative, Respect in Sport.

Co-founded by former NHL hockey player Sheldon Kennedy and Wayne McNeil, a former Rocky View Trustee, Respect in Sport is a grassroots online training program that aims to provide all young athletes with a positive, character-building experience. Specifically, the program is designed to assist coaches in identifying and effectively dealing with abuse, neglect, harassment and bullying in sport.

According to Wayne McNeil, since 2004 several national, provincial and school-based sport organizations, including Hockey Canada, have implemented the program to help youth sports organizations create a culture that is both positive and competitive.

"Our goal is to help organizations create and sustain an environment that promotes the kind of behaviours and values you want to see in your coaches, fans and players," said McNeil. "We developed Respect in Sport in consultation with the Canadian Red Cross to protect youth, inform leaders, and mitigate an organization's liability."

Coordinators for both jurisdictions said beginning May 1, 2010, the course will be a required program for Rocky View Schools and Foothills teacher and community coaches, as well as their middle, multi and high school administrators.

"With this training, we expect our coaches to be more confident in dealing with issues relating to abuse, neglect, bullying and harassment, contributing to a more positive and safe sporting culture in our schools," said Jacquie Mirtle, RVS' Sports Coordinator. "The program is 2.5 hours in length and its online delivery allows coaches to complete it at their leisure. We anticipate all of our coaches will be certified under the program by the start of the next year's sport seasons."

"We are proud to be a partner in this initiative that will provide everyday perspectives on the impact, positive and negative, our staff members, community members and volunteers have on the young people they coach," said FSD Superintendent Jim McLellan. "It is very important to remember, these youth look to our coaches not just as an expert in their field, but also as a mentor and role model."

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