

To Whom It may Concern:

As the Healthy Start Family Advisor at the Middle School, I see a lot of boys with unexpressed anger issues, low motivation and low self-esteem. I have found these three outward symptoms to be related and often show up together. When Bob Antonacci started his Sky High Gym and specifically targeted young males to train in wrestling and mixed martial arts, it got my attention. I saw this opportunity as an outlet for these teenage boys to direct their feelings and express them physically in a healthy way. And that is exactly what I have witnessed.

Since Mr. Antonacci started working with the middle school-aged boys as their wrestling coach, I've seen a huge shift in some boys that were previously having difficulties socially and/or academically. One boy in particular comes to mind. As a 7th grader, this boy was failing most of his classes and no matter what, he could not seem to muster up enough motivation to keep trying. This boy also has had some health issues and slight learning disabilities. He walked around with his head down most of the time, wore a hood even when it was warm and rarely smiled.

In 8th grade, he came to school on Saturdays to recover credits and started on Bob Antonacci's wrestling team. Soon after he started the team, I noticed a significant difference in this young man. He started walking around without the hoodie on and he was holding his head up and smiling all the time. He would go out of his way to say "hi" to me, and when I asked him how he was doing in his classes, he said "Great!" with a big smile. I checked his grades, and he was right, he was doing great. When I asked him about wrestling, he expressed that it was his favorite thing he's ever done and he plans to continue it in high school. I noticed that he seemed to feel involved in something important and seemed to feel a sense of belonging in a way that was not present the prior year. I credit Bob Antonacci with this success story. As I said earlier, this is just one of many boys he had a positive effect on this past year.

I believe it is crucial that our community support Bob Antonacci's efforts at the Middle School and at his gym as much as we possibly can. This gentleman is a kind, generous soul and is a much-needed positive influence on the young men in our community.

Most Sincerely,

Julann Warren