

**GA advances  
Girls Basketball, B1**

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# The Intelligencer

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## Beginning to coach boys beyond sports

**More and more young males involved in athletics are being taught to be respectful and to understand consent.**

By **THOMAS FRIESTAD**  
STAFF WRITER

Each Sunday morning after Warwick Travel Baseball coach John Clauss wraps up team practice, he gathers players in a circle. Though the 11-year-olds have just spent 90 minutes learning about grounders and fly balls, Clauss is hoping they will take away additional lessons — ones that will transcend the baseball diamond.

Respectful behavior and integrity are two

issues Clauss has raised with his players as the first coach in Bucks County to implement a program called Coaching Boys Into Men.

Though Clauss is tailoring his lessons toward his younger audience, area high school coaches are preparing to cover more mature topics, such as understanding consent and dating violence, as their seasons get underway.

The goal? To take 15 minutes of practice time to empower young men to maintain healthy relationships at a time when, according to Centers

See **COACHING, Page A2**



Video online

Check out how the Warwick coaches are adapting the program for their younger athletes.

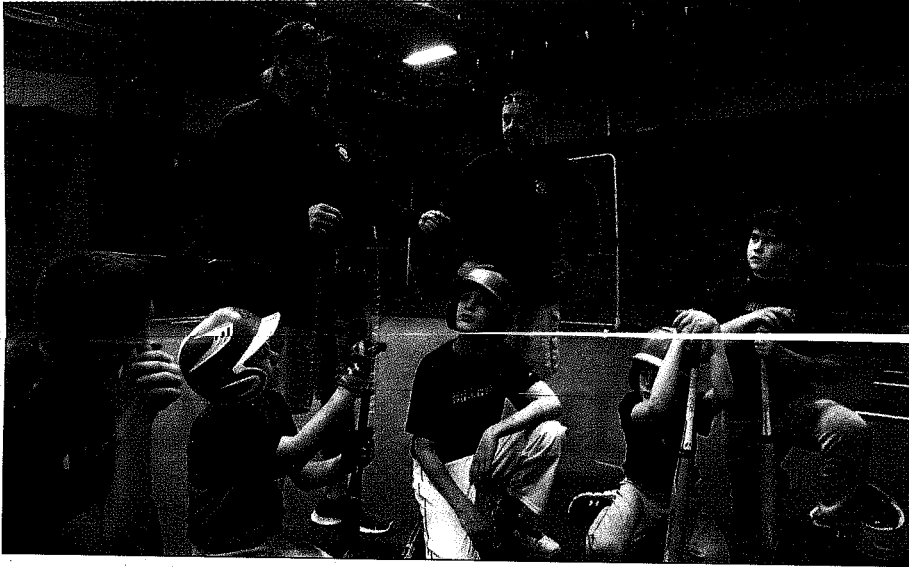


Coaching Boys Into Men suggests that 15 minutes of practice time can empower young men to maintain healthy relationships.

**KEVIN COOK**  
FOR THE  
INTELLIGENCER

## Fighting hate with a message





Warwick Travel Baseball coaches John Clauss (left) and Frank Cerauli speak to their players as part of the Coaching Boys Into Men program. **KEVIN COOK / FOR THE INTELLIGENCER**

# Coaching

*Continued from Page A1*

for Disease Control and Prevention data, nearly 1.5 million high school students nationwide each year have suffered physical abuse from a partner.

Coaching Boys Into Men is the brainchild of San Francisco-based nonprofit Futures Without Violence, which launched the program in 2001 and has implemented it in about 28 communities in the U.S. This year, Bucks County joined this list.

Clauss said representatives from A Woman's Place told him about Coaching Boys Into Men when they volunteered for the nonprofit Feeding Everyone At Special Times, of which he is president. He said he took an interest because, though he already discusses positive values with his players, Coaching Boys Into Men offered a more formalized curriculum, one he says he's now sharing with his network of coaches.

"In general, if we can send messages that aren't just, hey, go hit the ball, go throw the ball, we're doing things that have a broader

with their athletes.

Hunt said, given the different anti-violence programs A Woman's Place already implements in classrooms, adding an athletics program to the roster is a "natural transition."

"For young men to learn the importance of establishing healthy relationships with women and not getting wrapped up in the stereotypes or nonsense you would see on social media or in popular culture, they're getting this from people they rely on to be their leaders in coaches," Hunt said.

Central Bucks West will launch Coaching Boys Into Men with its baseball and football teams as a pilot program, he said. If it's a success, the school might expand the program to all its teams, boys and girls alike, Hunt added.

"We're trying to set a positive example," Hunt said.

Jen Hinds, curriculum manager for A Woman's Place, said she learned about Coaching Boys Into Men from the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence in 2016.

She cited a three-year Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study

Danielle Ferri, director of The Prevention Project, an arm of A Woman's Place that seeks to spread community awareness about domestic violence, said Coaching Boys Into Men marks a "tremendous next step" in tackling violence against women locally, in large part because of the "powerful" mentor role coaches can play in athletes' lives.

"Coaches are in a really unique position to have conversations about respect, integrity and nonviolence with athletes," Ferri said. "This is a lot of what our coaches are already talking about with their athletes."

Ferri said Coaching Boys Into Men focuses on young male athletes because program designers wanted to engage that demographic with sports, a topic dear to their hearts. She also stressed the value of engaging the coaches — men who might want to get involved with anti-violence initiatives but not know "where to put their energy."

"It's important to emphasize that (the program) is not at all about calling out young men and boys," Ferri said. "It's really a positive take on engaging the entire community and this is just one piece of the work we're

things that have a broader scope," Clauss said. "It's not brain surgery or some super unique thing, but it's a program that gives coaches a little bit of credibility. And as we continue to go forward, it could carry weight that has a trickle-down effect."

Clauss' son and travel team player, Christian, said he has a positive opinion of the lessons he has heard.

"(They've) given me good information on how to be a better person," he said.

Christian, 11, said his team's lessons have included different forms of respect — respecting teammates, opponents and family members, for example — lessons he thinks can transcend the baseball diamond.

"Most of your life is probably not going to be baseball; most of it's going to be off the field with other people," he said.

His teammate James Cerauli, 11, agreed, saying that the values Coaching Boys Into Men instills can boost morale.

"If we respect other people, everyone wins," Cerauli said. "If we say nice things when things aren't going well, it'll bring the team up."

John Clauss hopes the program will be used by coaches from other Bucks County youth baseball teams with whom he said he has shared the information: Warrington Youth Baseball and Horsham Little League.

Representatives from A Woman's Place, a nonprofit that offers services to domestic violence victims out of Doylestown Township, are working to get the program into local high schools as well. They already have one taker: Central Bucks High School West Athletic Director Henry Hunt.

Hunt and the head and assistant coaches of the boys baseball and football teams are set to review the program's curriculum and see how they can address topics such as insulting language and aggression

and Prevention study funded in Sacramento, California, in 2012 as a testament to the program's impact. The researchers found that program participants intervened far more often when they observed "abusive or disrespectful behaviors" from peers than those who had not participated.

Hinds said she hopes Coaching Boys Into Men can deliver similar results in Bucks communities.

"I hope people can really see how to intervene and to not be bystanders, what they should be saying and shouldn't be saying and really holding each other accountable," she said.

one piece of the work we're doing — we're engaging young girls and women, too, and everyone in the community."

Ferri said she and Hinds will continue sharing Coaching Boys Into Men with school and community coaches as interest arises, something she is optimistic will happen.

She said, "If it continues to pick up, I would be hopeful that the entire county could be a leader in ending violence against women in the state. That would be a really positive step for our efforts here."

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