

ADmission

FALL 2020

VIRGINIA INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC
ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER





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VIAAA Partnerships



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President's Message

Joe Breinig, CMAA
VIAAA President
John Champe High School

From the desk of the President comes what I hope to be an inspiring and motivating message. Everyone during this difficult and challenging time is concerned about our student athletes, coaches, school, community and family.

From a professional perspective, our organization – the VIAAA is here to support you in anyway needed. We have online professional development opportunities available through the VIAAA and NIAAA. Our network across our great Commonwealth is extensive. So many resources are available, just a phone call or email away is a wealth of knowledge and experiences that could assist each of us.

One of the things that makes our amazing organization so great is the people. So many hard working and dedicated professionals in the field of athletic administration support each other at every turn. I am so blessed to serve as the President of such a great organization. At the drop of a dime anyone of us would provide each other with guidance, direction, resources, documents or a simple word of wisdom or encouragement. I cannot tell you how many times I have been frustrated or in a bind and simply picked up the phone or sent an email and got exactly what

I needed to step up and accomplish the task in a confident way with the support of my fellow VIAAA members.

The athletic administration profession is one that the average person does not know what we do on a daily basis. The tasks we complete, the responsibilities we bare and the expectation placed on us are at times overwhelming. We are doers, people of action and when something needs to get done in our schools and communities – who do they call? The call us and we find a way to get it done.

The point of this message is to know you/we are not alone. We have each other and don't ever forget it!!! Just like when I was in the USMC, we are band of brothers/sisters and we always have each other back – no matter what. The relationships we forge now and moving forward will last a lifetime. I can say with confidence and a smile that my closest friends are the ones who have helped me through the trenches and difficult times in my life.

Stay strong, stay committed, stay focused and stay connected. We will all get through this together. ■



VIAAA RETIRED AD'S CORNER

5 Questions with Bob Stratton, Executive Director

Please list the high schools/years that you served as the Athletic Director/DSA (starting with most recent):

2013 – 2015 – The Steward School

2002 – 2013 – Hanover High School

2000 – 20002 – Patrick Henry High School

1991 – 2000 – Atlee High School (Assistant Athletic Administrator, Interim full time 3 years)

1982 – 1991 – Mills Godwin High School (Assistant Athletic Administrator)

1979 – 1982 – John Rolfe Middle School

1. What are you doing now?

I am retired after being a teacher, coach and athletic administrator for 36 years. I started July 1, 2020 as the VIAAA Executive Director and NIAAA Liaison.

2. What accomplishments are you most proud of in your career or at your former school?

Of all the things I am most proud of, it is that I had a chance to open four schools from scratch as a teacher, coach and athletic administrator (John Rolfe MS, Mills Godwin HS, Atlee HS, and Hanover HS). Being able to be a part of opening a brand new building as a teacher, coach and athletic administrator gives you the chance to plan, design and leave your "THUMB PRINT" on a building and community for years to come. The "FOOTPRINTS" that you develop will hopefully become the "LEGACY" that is followed by students, parents and the community in which the school serves.

3. What challenges do you see in the future for our profession?

While there are many challenges that lie ahead of us on an everyday basis, COVID-19 will be a game changer as to how we do things in the future. Being able to adapt and move forward will be a challenge for each of us. We must continue to get young people involved in Athletic Admin-

istration and give them the support needed to stay in the profession for many years to come. If we can do that, at the end of the day, they will each realize how many lives they can impact on a daily basis in such a positive way. In my opinion, Educational Based Athletic Administration is one of the most rewarding jobs you can ever be a part of in one's career!

4. What is one piece of advice that you would give to a newcomer in our profession?

Get involved in both the VIAAA and NIAAA! Create a group of fellow Athletic Administrators that you can talk to when things are tough and you need a listening ear or advice. Never think that your current problem is something that is unique to you or your school. Ask others for help in solving your problem or putting out the fire!

***One thing I did that others still laugh at me about is if a teacher, coach or administrator in my building sent me an email or text message, I would walk to their room or office to give them the answer. This allowed me to get a feeling of how they were doing and to carry on a conversation instead of allowing technology to take away the important piece of communication. Many times I would find that teacher, coach or administrator who was struggling and just needed a few kind words, a pat on the back, and a smile to get them through their day! Being able to communicate and look someone in the eye as you hold a conversation is something that I think is crucial to an administrator in today's school environment.

5. What is one piece of advice that you would give to a veteran AD?

As a veteran AD, we must not become stale in the way we approach things on a day-to-day basis. The world of Athletic Administration has changed so much over the years that we must adapt and move forward with the changing times. We all want to be Positive Leaders and make a difference in the lives of teachers, coaches, students, parents and the school community in which we serve! ■



Athletic Directors Play Crucial Role in Reopening High School Sports

Dr. Billy Haun
VHSL Executive Director

As December 7th draws near, everyone is excited for Virginia's high school competitions to resume. There has been much cooperation and work between the VHSL, VDH, VDOE, and the Governor's Office over the last few weeks to make this happen. There has been much hard work from the VHSL staff, Executive Committee, and member schools. While principals, superintendents, coach advisory committees, regional and district committees have invested much time and work into crafting the Championship +1 plan, athletic directors have done much of the "heavy lifting".

Athletic Directors were responsible for making sure each region was represented on the coach advisory committees. The ADs also were the principle communicators between district and region committees, and the coaches in their schools when finalizing and drafting the final version of the Championship +1 plan to be adopted by the Executive Committee. Many hours have been spent on Zoom meetings, phone calls, and exchanging emails creating regular season schedules and regional tournaments.

While the "operational" part of coordinating a season of athletic and academic competitions are important and challenging, reopening high school sports during the COVID year adds greater responsibilities for our

athletic directors. In many school divisions, athletic directors will shoulder much of the responsibility for orienting and training coaches and athletic staffs to COVID mitigation strategies, communicating with team members and parents, and ensuring safety precautions are followed. Additionally, daily cleaning, the use of locker rooms, and travel for competitions will also be challenges for athletic directors.

All the tasks mentioned will be difficult, but the athletic directors in VHSL member schools are up for the challenge. Since mid-June, when Virginia entered Phase II, athletic directors have worked closely with their school divisions to follow VDOE, VDH and VHSL guidelines for reopening schools and to provide safe environments and opportunities for student-athletes, coaches, and staff. As we move forward, this group of professionals will continue to meet the challenges and help provide opportunities for our student-athletes.

The VHSL staff would like to say Thank You to each athletic director for the outstanding job you have done, for supporting each other, and for keeping the safety and everyone a priority. We look forward working together as we begin the Championship +1 plan. ■



NIAAA News

Bob Stratton, CAA
VIAAA Executive Director
NIAAA Liaison

I hope that each of you are well and have started your new school year on a positive note even during these uncharted waters of COVID-19. The beginning of another school year brings with it many opportunities to impact the many students we encounter daily. It is also nice to start over each year and learn from our mistakes and accomplishments and try to develop that “chemistry” between parents, students and school personnel to create an environment that promotes teaching and learning both in the classroom and on our athletic facilities. I am both honored and humbled to serve as both your Executive Director and NIAAA Liaison. This association has provided outstanding leaders in the past, and I hope to follow in their footsteps by providing the leadership, vision, and expertise to continue to move our association forward. The outstanding State and National involvement of our membership is respected throughout the country. In this time of difficult decisions, we must continue to promote the crucial importance

of athletic administration and allowing our athletic administrators to attend VIAAA meetings, LTI classes, and our State Conference to grow professionally and better perform in our ever changing jobs.

In closing, please do not hesitate to let me know what the VIAAA or NIAAA can do for you. We are stronger in numbers and with your involvement and help in communicating our vision and goals to your school community, parents and students we will continue to be strong. That will only happen with your help! The 2020–2021 officers are excited about the year ahead as we continue to build upon the past.

Please contact me at bobstratton21@gmail.com or by phone (804) 347-7528 if we can help you in any phase of your job. I am here to serve you!

Thanks to each of you for all you do on a daily basis! Stay well and continued Smooth Sailing through these uncharted waters. ■



Kemper's Korner

Dick Kemper, CMAA

VISAA Vision Statement:

Develop a nationally recognized community of student-athletes with unparalleled competitive opportunities for participation and DEVELOPMENT IN strength of character

VISAA Mission Statement:

Provide accredited member schools the resources and competitive environment in education-based programs that establish a foundation for excellence founded in integrity, sportsmanship and leadership

The summer and fall of 2020 saw the VISAA, which governs state championship events for accredited private schools in Virginia, cancel fall championship events. However, the decision on whether to play fall sports was left up to schools and conferences as they mediate the reopening of most of our schools. A decision on winter championship events was to be made by November 1, 2020.

So many monthly Zoom meetings to keep our membership informed. Great work over the summer by our SMAC team and Executive Committee in developing guidelines for the return to play and an advised budget that will keep the Association running smoothly.

Extensive work by an ad hoc committee of the Executive Committee to study how and the potential format for winter state championship events in low to moderate risk level sports is being developed. By the time you read this column their recommendation will have been discussed by the membership in the annual membership meeting and recommendation

for return to winter sports voted on and implement along with Sports requirements, rule modifications and general recommendations in hosting events during Covid-19.

The challenges are many as we move from outside to inside events and the issues presented in that move from cleaning facilities, opening locker rooms and limit spectators, and keeping all in a safe environment while participation or watching. The safety and health of participants, officials and staff is paramount in the decision making of holding these events.

The alternatives presented from our Sports Committee Chairs and committee members have been many. As our many different Conferences have determined to have hybrid schedules for all sports starting in November with winter sports and then fall and spring sports along the lines of what the VHSL is offering in their return to play as presented challenges.

Many of those Conferences are ending their winter season in late January and our winter championship events are in mid-February. How can we accommodate those dates and the issue of our many boarding schools that are following the guidelines for higher education in Virginia by ending the fall term at Thanksgiving break, going virtual from Thanksgiving to a return to campus after the first of the year. There are many moving parts as we try to navigate the return to winter championships.

The focus is having successful regular season while maintaining social distancing and mask requirements

and transportation of teams in accordance with CDC, and state guidelines.

But what will we see and learn from this pandemic? Distance learning has maybe become somewhat of the norm. It will continue to be utilized in some form. Zoom meetings will continue to be a way to communicate with our coaches, student-athletes, and parents. We have learned that it is possible to conduct regular schedule league meetings virtually in an effective interacting manner. While cutting down on travel and lost time at our schools. This will be utilized more as we conduct business and communications. What guidelines need to be developed that protects that way of communication. How would that impact our yearly budget? Is it a cost effective means of cutting expenses? Can we do more live streaming

of events and hold webinars on current events in this Covid 19 pandemic are areas that will be explored and used for the betterment of all.

What will the face of education-based athletics be in the future? Will there be changes? What will the face of the VISAA look like in the next few years? The VISAA does not have answers to those 3 concerns but will be working on them through planning for our next strategic plan

Many challenging times ahead and we are fortunate to GET to tackle them and not HAVE to tackle them. Stay tuned for what the new normal will be as the past way of doing things is gone and we must be willing to adapt and conquer to provide a strong healthy environment for education-based athletics. ■



Bob Robbins

Membership Information

The VIAAA seeks the membership of every public and independent school athletic administrator to provide greater educational opportunities and courses for athletic administrators and effectiveness in promoting the educational value of interscholastic athletics. New members should complete the Google form below. Our membership chair will be in touch regarding profile set up and dues.

Existing members will receive automatic renewal notifications from our database system, AMP - Final Forms. Members are encouraged to renew online via Credit Card payment but we will accept checks sent to our membership chair. If you have any questions, please contact Bob Robbins (robert.robbs@vb-schools.com).

Types of Membership - WE ARE A DUAL MEMBERSHIP STATE (VIAAA & NIAAA). Virginia Athletic Administrators are encouraged to join both the VIAAA and NIAAA annually.

ACTIVE: Open to all high school athletic administrators, assistant athletic administrators, coordinators of girl's sports, coordinators of student activities whose

responsibilities include athletics, middle school athletic directors, and coordinators of athletics for school systems whose schools are members of the VHSL, independent schools, and middle schools.

ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP FEES: Active Membership: Annual \$125, Lifetime \$1100

RETIRED: Any to open retired member who has been an active member of the association for eight years.

RETIRED MEMBERSHIP FEES: Retired: Annual \$30, Lifetime \$300

LIFETIME: An option available to any active member or anyone who is qualified for active membership. This onetime fee is good for the lifetime of the member and automatically converts to allied or retired membership with the status change of the individual regardless of years of service.

MEMBERSHIP FEES: VIAAA Lifetime Member prior to May, 2019: Annual \$85, Lifetime \$800 ■



VIAAA Scholarships

Chris Felton, CAA
Bayside High School

The VIAAA offers six \$1,500 scholarships each year to VHSL and Independent schools' student-athletes. The scholarships honor John C. Youngblood (4), Claudia Dodson (1), and the VIAAA Past Presidents Leadership (1).

Any Athletic Administrator who is a member of the VIAAA may nominate ONE student-athlete from their school for each award (each school should only have a maximum of

three nominees). To find out more regarding criteria for each scholarship, as well as print scholarship applications visit the VIAAA site - <http://viaaa.org/about-us/scholarship>. This year's application deadline is Tuesday, December 1, 2020. Any questions may be emailed to Christopher. felton@vbschools.com ■



How does your garden grow?

Dan Jones

Planting your Athletic garden survival, replenishment, and growth of your department (adapted from my church bulletin):

Plant 3 rows of peas:

1. Peace of mind
2. Peace of heart
3. Peace of soul

Plant 4 rows of squash:

1. Squash gossip
2. Squash indifference
3. Squash grumbling
4. Squash selfishness

Plant 4 rows of lettuce:

1. Lettuce be faithful
2. Lettuce be kind
3. Lettuce be patient
4. Lettuce really love one another

No garden is without turnips:

1. Turnip for meetings
2. Turnip for service
3. Turnip to help one another

To conclude your garden must have Thyme:

1. Thyme for each other
2. Thyme for family
3. Thyme for friends

We all need this garden during this pandemic so water freely and cultivate with Love because there is much fruit in your garden because you reap what you sow. You can tie this thought process into the Inside Out Initiative. ■



2020 New Athletic Directors Workshop

by Christopher Felton, CAA and Lisa Corprew, CAA
Bayside High School

The VIAAA welcomed 37 Athletic Administrators to Charlottesville High School in Charlottesville, VA July 28th – 30th for the New Athletic Director's Workshop. Our theme was, "A Stepping Stone", as they are taking their first steps into what will be a long, joyous, and rewarding journey for each in this profession. This was another banner year for this workshop and attendees ranged from newly hired AD's to Assistant AD's to Graduate Students to AD's that have been on the job for years but have switched schools/divisions.

The workshop was sponsored by BSN Sports (providing lunches); Downtown Athletics (providing VIAAA Face Coverings); and Rivanna Gear & Apparel (providing VIAAA Hand Sanitizer). The workshop was set-up with all safety protocols in place and each participant practiced social distancing, wore their face coverings, and washed their hands often.

The VIAAA was awarded an NIAAA Outreach Grant, for a second year, which covered LTC 501 & 502 during the three days; LTC 503 online after the workshop; NIAAA/VIAAA membership for a year for each delegate; and three delegates were awarded a National Conference experience for free (registration/hotel), when the National Conference returns face-to-face.

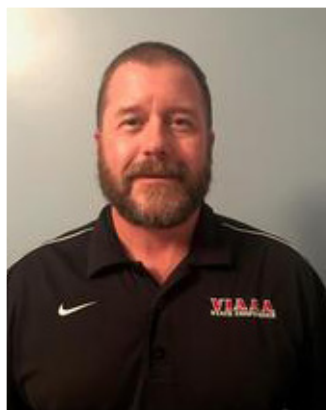
A stellar faculty of 20+ Athletic Administrators from

across the Commonwealth were led by Christopher Felton, CAA and Lisa Corprew, CAA. In addition to LTC 501 & 502 the delegates were engaged in sessions about the First Year Experience, Sports Law, Getting Involved in the VIAAA/NIAAA, Mentorships, and the Top 15 Tips by Job Type (separated by classification). We were also delighted to have with us, via Zoom, Dr. Billy Haun and Mr. Darryl Wilson from the VHSL Office to welcome the New AD's into the profession and share information on forms and Academic Activities. Everyone was invited out to dinner both nights in Downtown Charlottesville to continue the great discussions from the day and enjoyed some fellowship. The second day brought rotation courses with our Putting It All Together sessions that dealt with the following topics: Finances/Budgeting, Office/Technology, and Supervising Coaches/Advisers.

The workshop was a huge success because of the great Athletic Administrators that gave of their time to build relationships with these 37 new AD's. The future of the VIAAA and Student Activities in the Commonwealth of Virginia is strong and even brighter after this experience. We are already starting to plan next years' workshop and look forward to welcoming new AD's and anyone that has never attended the New AD's Workshop next summer. ■



Photos taken at the 2020 New Athletic Directors Workshop, Charlottesville, VA.



Sports without Spectators during a Pandemic

Dan Mullen

Warhill High School, Athletic Director, Region 4A Rep.

Back in the Spring of 2020 when everything shut down and schools went to online teaching and all sporting events were canceled and seasons ended, the thought of how things would be when the time came to have sporting events, started to be on the minds of all who are involved with athletics at the high school level. First, would there be athletics? And second, if we had athletics, would there be games and contests? Third, if games and contests were allowed to play, would there be spectators in the stands and stadiums? With all the guidelines and mitigations that began to be put in place to hold conditioning & practices for our student/athletes, the question of having spectators was a hard one to answer. The top priority for all school systems, is the health & safety of students and staff. Not having spectators would be a hard “pill” to swallow, but it may just be a decision that needs to be made if games and contests are to be played.

Fortunately, the NFHS Network and PlayOn came out with an initiative called School Broadcast Program (SBP) that schools could purchase two Pixellot systems for their school to be able to stream athletic events. Our school system began to research this program and discussing how it could potentially benefit our athletic programs when sports return during a pandemic. We were fortunate to be able to travel to Princess Anne High School in Virginia Beach to look at their Pixellot cameras that were installed in their gym and stadium. Robert Robbins, Student Ac-

tivities Coordinator, was gracious enough to provide some insight into the system. By seeing the system first hand, gave us a better picture and understanding when presenting to our Central Office. We began to meet with the Coordinator of Athletics, Assistant Superintendent, and Principals to propose the NFHS Network & PlayOn initiative for broadcasting athletic events. The process involved gathering quotes from other streaming vendors and communicating with PlayOn on the requirements to install the camera's in our gym and stadium, along with communicating with the school division's Technology Department as they will be involved in the installation process and connecting to the school's network. One of the last steps was to involve the School Division's legal counsel to approve the agreement between school system and NFHS Network and PlayOn.

One question that was asked during this process was how will schools make money if no spectators can attend? One benefit of the School Broadcast Program, is that it allows revenue sharing from the paid subscriptions to the NFHS Network. Granted, it's not a guarantee that a school will have the same revenue as having spectators at games, but it provides a service to the families that may not otherwise be able to see their student play. And at this point, what's more important? Having our students engaged in activities they love or not being able to play anything?? ■



Dave Siock

Return to Participate Protocols

No question that this school year has been anything but normal up to this point. School divisions across the Commonwealth are dealing with some pretty strenuous situations: trying to figure out how to get students back in their buildings safely, easing the minds of students, parents, and staff, dealing with budget shortfalls, filling the many teacher vacancies that have no doubt affected a lot of our school divisions. Getting athletic/activities up and running was farther down the priority list, and understandably so. Shortly after the 2019-2020 school year ended, the Virginia High School League, thankfully, granted schools the ability to bring student-athletes back on campus for out of season conditioning. As we learned in June, the first step in getting out of season conditioning started in our schools was to submit a health plan to the Virginia Department of Health outlining compliance with Virginia Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control mitigation strategies.

The Beach District formed a Return to Participation Task Force to develop this plan. The task force included high school and middle school principals and student activity coordinators, central office personnel, and CHKD personnel. Once the health plan was submitted and subsequently approved by the VDOH, work was done to educate the coaches on the specific safety protocols included in the plan.

The Task Force took great care in providing coaches with as much detail on what was permitted during their conditioning sessions. Below are a few of the protocols during Stage 1 of our Return to Participate process:

- Athletes must have a current physical.
- Each athlete and coach are to be screened by the athletic trainer each day.
- Each session is limited to one hour. No more than 50 individuals are permitted on school grounds for each session.
- While conditioning, athletes must remain 10' from one another.
- Athletes are grouped in pods of no more than 10, plus one coach.
- The coach and athletes cannot switch to another pod. However, if a coach has more than 10 athletes, then the coach can create a second pod and work with those athletes once the first pod has completed their session.
- Pods must workout separately from each other.
- No equipment is permitted.
- Conditioning sessions must remain on school grounds and outdoors.
- Athletes and coaches need to bring their own face covering and water bottle (filled).

Before coaches were permitted to start conditioning, they had to submit a conditioning plan and meet with their student activities coordinator to go over all the safety protocols. Fall teams were the only ones permitted to condition when the plan was started. That has since changed to where winter sports are now allowed to participate. As the Governor has eased restrictions on gatherings, we have increased the number of individuals allowed on campus per session

to 60. (The Task Force did not increase the allowable number of participants to 250, as allowed by the Governor's recommendation, mainly because it would make the screening process too cumbersome.)

The return to participate program at Landstown has worked very well. Since we started this in early August, we have had eight of our teams participate (and all have continued to this point). A total of 170 students have participated, without any COVID-19 issues.

As I type this article and 9th grade students have begun in-person learning in Virginia Beach City Public Schools, the Task Force is looking to increase the number of participants allowed on campus,

eliminating the screening process (since students are self-screening prior to coming to school for classes), allowing spring sports to participate, incorporating the use of equipment, opening up gyms to fall and winter sports, and allowing non-athletic student groups to meet on campus.

To this point the coaches are thankful for the opportunity to work with their athletes, and the athletes are thankful to be with their teammates again. But as the beginning of winter sports approaches, our goal is to allow coaches the opportunity to implement their normal pre-season routine so the athletes will be ready for practice and competition.

Only time will tell! ■

Unmask Mental Health

Gary Leake

Mental Health Awareness is a very important subject for today's students and student athletes. Athletic departments should adopt a platform that will provide program participants with skills, resources and support. To foster wellness, programs should focus on the following areas:

SPORTS AND MENTAL HEALTH

The impact of high school sports has a great influence on a student athlete's physical, mental and emotional health. Participation in sports can have a major impact on quality of life and physical activity has significant benefits for mental health. In addition, student athletes have the opportunity to also gain benefits that go beyond physical activity. Participation in sports can improve self-esteem, teamwork skills and it can foster a close connection between peers and supportive adults.

EXERCISE, ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

Exercise positively impacts levels of serotonin, a chemical that helps regulate mental health, and exercise releases endorphins, the body's natural "happy chemicals." Young people who develop an athletic skill feel more positive about their bodies and their physical abilities, therefore their self-esteem improves. In addition, student athletes may also experience benefits such as: more confidence, better concentration, reduced levels of tension, improved levels of cognitive function, increased critical thinking

and judgement skills and an enhanced ability to cope with stress.

SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS

High school student athletes that are participating in sports are less likely to have suicidal thoughts and actions. Participation in sports involves physical activity and studies prove that exercise may reduce depression, therefore reducing suicidal thoughts. Participation in sports has many positive side effects, including the social bonding from being on a team and the increase of self-esteem from achieving success in a sport. However, the number of teens that have been admitted to hospitals as a result of suicidal thoughts or self-harm has more than doubled during the last decade. Suicide can be the tragic result of untreated mental health concerns, thus treatment is a vital factor in teen suicide prevention.

EXERCISE AND SUBSTANCE USE

As positive as teen sports can be, there is also a potential downside between sports and mental health. Too often, teen athletes feel pressured to overachieve in sports. Therefore, they sometimes turn to performance enhancing drugs. Furthermore, the pressure can lead to injury, which may lead to the need for pain management. As a result, teens may use strong narcotics which can cause serious health problems such as addiction, overdose or even death. Coaches, doctors and parents need to monitor teen athletes to ensure they are not succumbing to pressure and they need to be vigilant about avoiding addictive pain relief drugs for injured athletes. ■



Our glass is half full

Hollie Godfrey

Why did you enter the field of high school athletic administration? I think for many if not most, we got into this business to make a positive, lasting impact on the lives of our student-athletes. It sounds so cliché to say, but we got into this business to make a difference.

Like you, when I signed up for this job, I expected long, evening hours covering events. I expected to create budgets that would stretch the limits and imaginations of any certified public accountant. I knew I'd make game and transportation schedules, emergency plans, foul weather plans, heck I think I had a plan to cover every imaginable emergency one could think of. And then, there was COVID 19. Where was the instruction manual for managing high school athletics during a global pandemic?

Overnight, the job drastically changed. Suddenly, we were working from home, meeting in zooms, cancelling seasons, rearranging seasons, redoing budgets and schedules, making plans only to change them days later. It didn't take long to realize we could either throw our hands up and give in or dig our heels in and be part of a solution that would still bring meaningful opportunities to high school student-athletes, even during a pandemic.

Quickly we all began to see that the student-athlete experience needed a shift from focusing on wins, losses, college scholarships, etc. to a focus on the student-athletes' mental health. How were our student-athletes coping with these drastic changes?

What opportunities could we offer that would show we cared for their social and emotional well-being?

Like many of you, it became apparent that there wasn't an advice column I could turn to for answers. Simply put, it was time to network, reach out to peers, listen to others faced with the same issues, lean on the understanding of others in the same walk. It was time to ask the AD in another building, in a neighboring city, how are you handling this issue? What great ideas are you using to connect with your student-athletes? Tell me how you planned that meaningful opportunity for your kids!

We began collaborating, creating opportunities that would help our student-athletes walk away with positive memories of a shortened season, of a cancelled season, of an abbreviated senior year. It was so satisfying to hear from so many that the bottom line was that in any decision we made, if we consistently endeavored to place the needs of our students first, then our shared walk was always leading us in the right direction.

For this gift of unity, collaboration and friendship, I say thank you. Let's be proud of our shared love of sports and student-athletes. Let's be proud of our accomplishments during a truly unique time. I would also encourage you to take care of yourself. Pat yourself on the back for helping guide your student-athletes down a path, through a walk that no one before us had ever traveled. ■



Be Involved!

Jonathan Bukva, CMAA

Reagan Middle School, Prince William County Schools

I am excited to be the new Middle School Committee chair for the VIAAA. I am looking forward to working with middle school and high school athletic directors alike. The pandemic has been tough on me as I am sure it has been tough on you as well. The NIAAA was one thing that helped me get through the Spring and the Summer. My pandemic seemed like it was just one big webinar or Zoom call. I spent countless hours watching webinars from the NIAAA on all kinds of topics. It was interesting to see how other states were handling Covid protocols and return-to-play. It still is interesting.

Another way to stay connected and involved with the NIAAA is through its app, "Social Link." It is a mini version of Facebook for athletic directors. Athletic directors love to share information. I have found the Social Link app to be the easiest way to find current information from across the country. You can also access the discussions through the NIAAA website. Simply log into the NIAAA website, click my profile, and then my feed. From there, it is just like Facebook minus the ads. I have met some really great athletic directors from across the nation. Some of these ADs

had their own webinars for their coaches and other ADs that I was able to be a part of. As I mentioned before, ADs love to share ways to be successful. I am sure we have all been to a coaching conference and the coach gave you some tips, but kept the best stuff for themselves. I have found that ADs share it all. We are all on the same team with the same purpose of creating the best experience possible for our athletes. So get involved and meet some new people.

My last bit of encouragement is for you to attend the NIAAA Conference this year online. LTC classes will be at a reduced rate, which will make it easier for you to knock out classes as you work towards your next certification. There will also be general sessions where some of the top ADs in the country will share their best practices. I know things are slow for some right now, but it is also insane for others. We always preach self-care to each other during this difficult time. I think self-care also includes self-improvement. Take a class or join a conference. I guarantee you that you will learn something new.

Good Luck this year. ■



Professional Development and NIAAA Certifications for Athletic Administrators

Kristy Hunter, CAA
Glouster High School

The Virginia Interscholastic Athletic Administration Association (VIAAA) works with the National Interscholastic Athletic Administration Association (NIAAA) to offer Athletic Administrators opportunities to obtain many different certification levels. These levels are Registered Athletic Administrator (RAA), Registered Middle School Athletic Administrator (RMSAA), Certified Athletic Administrator (CAA) and Certified Master Athletic Administrator (CMAA). For these different certification levels specific classes are required that will help you build on your daily work experience and help increase your readiness for possible future experiences. The steps to complete these great professional development opportunities can be found on both the NIAAA & VIAAA websites under professional development:

<https://members.niaaa.org/page/Certification>
<https://viaaa.org/professional-dev-t/certification>

Certification Information from the NIAAA Handbook:

- Registered Athletic Administrator (RAA): LTI 501, 502, 503
- Registered Middle School Athletic Administrator (RMSAA): LTI 501, 502, 503, 504, 700, 701
- Certified Athletic Administrator (CAA): LTC 501, 502, 503, 504, 506
 - » Served minimum of 2 years as an Athletic Administrator with signed contract, Pass multiple choice exam [RAA or RMSAA are NOT prerequisites for CAA]
 - » Certified Master Athletic Administrator (CMAA): LTI 501, 502, 503, 504, 506, 508 and 510

- CAA Designated Received, 1 Operations & Management Courses selected from 600 series, 1 Leadership Courses selected from 700 series, 3 Additional electives from any level, Completion of a graduate level written document.

The professional development courses are offered online throughout the year. Leadership Training Institute (LTI) classes are listed on the NIAAA website under the learning catalog. The VIAAA offers classes during the year at the Spring Seminar, VIAAA State Conference, Summer Institute, New AD's workshop and Fall Seminar. These maybe webinars this year. A list of upcoming LTI classes being offered can be found on the VIAAA website.

The VIAAA has a great incentive for anyone that obtains a certification; they are willing to reimburse 50% of the certification application fee for NIAAA/VIAAA members after required paperwork is turned in and approved.

The VIAAA is an amazing resource for athletic administrators to acquire classes and grow as a profession. Please feel free to contact PD Chair Kristy Hunter – khunter@gc.k12.va.us – 724-255-0835 or Jeff Dietze – jeffdietze1@verizon.net – 703-915-8528

Other forms of Professional Development for Coaches and Administrators:

National Federation of High School Sports and nfhslearn.com/ is a fantastic resource for educational courses for coaches, administrators, parents and players. One of the newest courses available is the COVID-19 For Coaches & Administrators. This course is a great resource to use as a requirement to have all coaches take before the start of their 20-21 season. ■



The Challenge Before Us

Mark Halsey

Athletic Director Reg. 1D, Chilhowie High School

As we closed out the 2019-20 school year with no athletic events, the process of starting sports and academic seasons back during a pandemic has been and will continue to be challenge. There were many predictions made during the spring and summer about what the upcoming year would look like with some being correct while others not. And some are yet to be seen how they will play out. One prediction I made when this started was that this pandemic would impact schools the way Columbine shootings did in the spring of 1999. We will never be the same or do things the same way after this. As we look at the upcoming Championship +1 season, this will never be truer for athletic directors as we begin to prepare.

Each day comes with more and new information about how to prevent the virus from spreading, to the number of cases in our area and state, to what is the most effective way to prevent contracting the virus. Guidelines have changed from March all the way up to where we are today and will continue to change as we learn more about how to protect ourselves from the disease. Add in the fact that some people do not care about taking any measures to protect themselves or others around them and we have a huge task ahead of us as we prepare for this year.

As I planned for the upcoming year I found I had more questions about what and how we would be doing things than anyone had answers. Our school division was in overdrive working out plans for how the academic year was going to work and what resourc-

es were needed for our community prepare for the upcoming year. Many of my questions would have to wait.

Today we are looking at winter sports just a few weeks away and I am looking at how I am going to make this work. I thought I would share some of my concerns and plans in hope that they will help someone else. Being a small school we have a small gym that was built in late 50's and has had few renovations. For basketball, teams sit on the front row of our bleachers and fans are in the next row behind them. As I look to socially distance players and fans, this will not be a possibility. Our score table also sits in the stands which puts our score keeper and clock operator at greater risk. Next our cheer leaders have to sit during play and they will have to distance themselves as they sit in the stands. With all these concerns, and need for space, there is little room left for fans. My initial plan is to use one side of the gym for teams and score table and allow fans to use only one side of bleachers. Our district has also started discussions about the format of our games. We are looking at playing girls and boys at opposite sites to help limit exposure of individual teams and also allow for more fans to possibly attend each game. Not knowing what the attendance limits will be for our events, we have to plan for how many and who gets to attend. With limited seating in our gym, we will have to limit the number of people who can enter. Parents will have the first option of purchasing tickets and a limited number will be provided to the visiting team. I have signed up with GOFAN to help make this easier and

making it a cashless and touchless process for our gate workers. Fans will also be able to watch games on the NFHS Network for games played in our gym or football stadium.

Outdoor events bring on their own challenges. Playing football in February and March will require a lot of planning. Being outside will help us keep fans and players safe by being able to distance ourselves with more room. Baseball and softball travel teams have been playing all summer and fall with very little outbreaks associated with their events. Some other new concerns will be the weather and facilities. February can have cold temperatures that can make the playing surface as hard as concrete if frozen. This will impact player safety. Bleachers will be more prone to having ice and snow that will need to be removed. All our support staff will have to prepare for the possibility of low temperature. Facilities will have to be weather proof from freezing. We usually winterize our stadium and bathrooms after the last home game. If it snows, well that could knock any of us out of a whole week or more. Visiting locker rooms will have to be cleaned before and after game to help protect both schools. At this time we have not been given any direction about serving concession items at any events. Cleaning up after events will have to be done with extra precautions for our staff as well. Discussions with my coaches have also brought up suggestions and ideas of how to work through some con-

cerns. We have looked at possibly dressing at home when we play close road games and not using locker rooms. Limiting the number of players to a travel squad. Allowing players to travel with parents. Cutting out handshakes before and after games. Teams must provide their own water bottles for events. One school division in Tennessee asked all there athletes to stay all virtual for school to reduce the possibility of contracting the virus. They are playing fall sports as scheduled.

There are many challenges to face in the upcoming months and we will have our hands full working out the details. The activities inside our facilities will have different problems from outside activities. But we will find a way to make it happen safely. My final recommendation is to be prepared as well as you can with a backup to your backup plan. One thing I have found is that anyone can be removed from their duties any moment if they have been exposed to the covid virus. A clock keeper or coach could be pulled from an event without any notice. Any good team will have a deep bench, so make sure your bench is deep in all positions. I know I have only scratched the surface of this task we have before us but I know one thing for certain is that we will come through this like champs. If there is one thing I have learned from 15 years as a member of the VIAAA is that athletic directors find a way. ■