

it is equally important that we show our students that the activity is important in the first place, and that we encourage them to stay involved. This doesn't necessarily mean that all of our students should grow up to become debate coaches, only that all of our students should want to grow up to become debate coaches.

Okay, so maybe that's not necessary, either. There are, though, a thousand ways for students to stay involved. Certainly, coaching is a good one, either as a head coach or an assistant. But students can also be involved as judges, as advocates, even as parents. Support for speech and debate at Evanston Township is very high, because there are many former debaters who are now administrators or parents involved in the school: they, too, are now part of my family.

When Ms. Radow started at Nova, she had no experience in debate. Fifty years ago, that was understandable: the community was smaller and less diverse, the activity was younger, and teachers with debate experience were in shorter supply. What was understandable then, though, is unacceptable today. With tens of thousands of members, the NFL brings speech and debate to every corner of our nation, and there are thousands of experienced students graduating each year. We need more of them to stay involved, and so we need to work harder to keep them involved. After all, family is forever. ■

About the Author

Jeff Hannan is the current head coach of Evanston Township High School. He is a senior instructor at the Florida Forensics Institute in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. He won the NFL National Championship in Congressional Debate, in the House of Representatives, in 2000.

Promoting Your Forensic Program

by Steve Meadows

Think about this: Every newspaper in America has employees who are paid to report on sports activities full-time. Most of them include in their jobs (or as their only jobs) high school sports. Therefore, the athletic teams and coaches don't have to do the level of promotion that you do. You, as the speech or debate coach, don't have such reporters hired to work for you. You have to do it (or ask someone to do it) or no one else will. If not, forensics will remain about dead bodies, not about your kids in your town.

After a tournament:

- Type up the tournament results from your team. Often, at the beginning, you don't have many trophies to report. I used to type, "Jenny Jones received a perfect score at the Harrison County Invitational Saturday for her performance in Prose." That means she got a 1 in a round. It sounds good. And when they win something, treat it like the Academy Awards. We don't get pep rallies and cheerleaders, so WE make the big fuss.
- Send your typed results everywhere you can:
 - to the person who posts items on your school's Web site;
 - to the public relations/communications director for your school district;
 - to the faculty and staff at your school;
 - to an e-mail list you maintain for "Forensics News";
 - to your board members and superintendent;
 - to the person who makes the daily announcements at your school;
 - and (especially) to your local paper.

Find out how your newspaper wants to receive school news (e-mail, fax, in person, whatever) and send them your team news EVERY time you compete. The newspaper in Danville is GREAT about publishing our results. I simply e-mail them the results on the Monday after each tournament. (If I do it first thing Monday morning, it often makes the paper that afternoon.) There is NO better way to build up community support for your team (and its fundraisers) than to let people know what and how you're doing.

(continued on next page)

About the Author

Steve Meadows is a three-diamond coach at Danville High School in Kentucky. He has served 13 terms as the Kentucky District Chair, winning the Best Chair Communications award in 2003.

Figure 1: Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mudville High School placed third of 20 schools at the Dustburg Invitational, Saturday, November 20. The team won seven awards at the meet. Senior K. C. Outfielder led the team with first place in Poetry and sixth in Storytelling.

Grovers Corners High took first at the tournament, followed by Bedford Falls, Mudville, Walnut Grove, Mayberry, and Lake Wobegon rounding out the top six schools.

Full team results are listed below. Mudville will next compete at the Lake Wobegon Above Average Invitational on December 4.

Jane Eyre: 2nd, Prose; Agnes Ofgod: 6th, Dramatic Interpretation and 2nd, Improv Duo; K. C. Outfielder: 1st, Poetry and 6th, Storytelling; Ebenezer Scrooge: 3rd, Prose; Walt Whitman: 2nd, Improv Duo.

For further information, please contact coach Tom Sawyer at 555-236-9999 or tom.sawyer@mudville.kyschools.us. We welcome a chance for an article about the team or to have a picture of the kids with their trophies in the paper.

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Editor's Note:
For additional resources to help publicize your team, check out our Coaching Guide, available online at www.nflonline.org. Go to the Resources page, then click the Coaching Guide icon.

Notes about Figure 1:

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- 2) Mudville High School placed third of 20 schools at the Dustburg Invitational, Saturday, November 20. The team won seven awards at the meet. Senior K. C. Outfielder led the team with first place in Poetry and sixth in Storytelling.
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- 6) For further information, please contact coach Tom Sawyer at 555-236-9999 or tom.sawyer@mudville.kyschools.us. We welcome a chance for an article about the team or to have a picture of the kids with their trophies in the paper.
- 7) ###

- 1) Note this at the top so the newspaper knows immediately that this is a press release, not a news tip (they handle each differently).
- 2) Immediately state the name of the school, the date, where it was, and what significant happened. It's often good to recognize a kid who does the best as that may be the kid they feature in the paper; it also gives the kid a charge to see that s/he "leads" the team.
- 3) I list the top six schools to build awareness that this activity takes place at our rival schools as well as to help readers "follow" our progress against other teams; sports fans love this.
- 4) Preview next meet to show you are still in "the thick of things."
- 5) I list everything I can think of here. If the tournament recognizes 7th place or "next out" awards, I put them in too; who cares if all they won was 7-Up? If it's early in your team history and you don't have many awards yet, list that "Tom Jones received a perfect score in a round of Extemporaneous" when Tom receives a 1/100 in third round. It's something with which to start, to make the kids feel good and to let people know you're doing well—even if it's not as well as you will do later on in your team's history.
- 6) Include contact information for follow-ups and future opportunities for publicity.
- 7) End of release.