



Congratulations to Stephen Halberg of the Delaware Juniors Volleyball who has been chosen to receive the Junior Assembly USA Volleyball Service Award for Outstanding Male Coach for 2012.

Following is the nomination letter for his award written by Delaware Juniors Director and former CHRVA board member:

Five years ago, while I was teaching an IMPACT course, there was a gentleman in the back of the class that just seemed different than the rest of the coaches in class. For starters he was not associated with any club. He was there on his own and to become a better coach. He was there because he wanted to be, not because he had to be. After class, I introduced myself to him and learned that his name was Stephen Halberg. He has three boys and has been a lifelong volleyball player. Further discussions indicated that he was looking to get his boys involved in volleyball, but there was nowhere to play. I advised him about Delaware Juniors and how we were looking to start a boys program but could not find anybody to get it started. That was the start of the boys program at Delaware Juniors.

Halberg quickly got to work. He and his wife Kristi started with the grassroots, knowing that was the only way to build a boys program was from the ground up, not just with the limited high school boys playing in Delaware. They made contact with practically every elementary school and middle school in the area, set up free volleyball clinics in gym classes, and developed relationships with the physical education teachers to teach them how to teach volleyball.

Year one started out like any other new program. We had enough boys to make two teams but the volleyball skill was not the best. The trick was to keep the boys involved and to convince them that volleyball was not just a girls' sport. Year one wrapped up as a success, we had not won a single game but the boys all improved and most of all, they were excited to be playing volleyball. Halberg did not take the summer off. Instead, he looked for places for boys to play. He established an evening of volleyball at a local park, provided them with camp information, and of course, continued to recruit new players to the program. Year two saw the same two teams but this time they were volleyball players. The teams started to win games, the players started to take the sport much more seriously, and they were hooked. The two years of hard work on and off the court was starting to pay off. The boys' volleyball program was no longer a project, but now a full-fledged program at Delaware Juniors. Years three and four saw incremental growth in numbers but the skill level improvement of the teams was exponential, including a regional championship at the 13s age level. This year is the

culmination of Stephen Halberg's work. Year five has our 18s team competing at a high level. These were the kids that started the boys program that had no idea what volleyball was and that had to be cultivated into volleyball players. All of the time, effort, and energy that Stephen Halberg has put into the boys program has paid off. The boys' players have earned the respect of the girls' teams and other coaches. Most important, the players he has worked with for five years have earned his respect. He has developed a special relationship with each of them and many of them will be off to play collegiate volleyball. Five years ago, the boys' teams looked like the *Bad News Bears*, now they are playing for tournament championships. All of this was made possible by Stephen Halberg. All he needed was a club to call home and the rest is history.

In my 20 years of coaching, I have come across special coaches and Stephen Halberg is one of those. He has sacrificed countless hours in the gym, on the phone, and on the computer to make boys volleyball in Delaware a success. His efforts are also felt in the Chesapeake region. The boys' teams were literally 2<sup>nd</sup> class participants. With his help and persistence, the region's boys' program now is on the same level as the girls' program. Without Stephen Halberg, Delaware Juniors would not have a boys' program, the Chesapeake Region would not be where they are today, and the hundreds of boys that he exposed to volleyball would not been playing the best sport in the world.