

Butler Eagle

McCloud Helping Kids 24-7



John McCloud, Executive Director, Athletic Director, Head Wrestling Coach – Summit Academy

By John Enrietto
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HERMAN — John McCloud qualified for PIAA Wrestling Tournament in high school and competed in three national tournaments as a wrestler for Mansfield University.

Just don't ask the 1972 Valley High School graduate his win-loss record.

He has no idea.

"I was all about hard work and getting ready for my next opponent," McCloud said. "That's where my focus was.

"If I worked hard enough, I figured I had a chance to win."

He still carries that same philosophy today as executive director, athletic director and head wrestling coach at Summit Academy. He's held those positions since the school opened its doors in 1996.

That philosophy also carried McCloud to induction into the Allegheny-Kiski Valley Sports Hall of Fame Saturday night at the Clarion Hotel in New Kensington.

"It's a wonderful thing," McCloud said of his induction. "It's one of the most exciting things to happen to me in my life."

It was pretty deserving as well.

McCloud began his teaching career and became the first wrestling coach at Glen Mills, a juvenile delinquent program in Philadelphia.

He also served as assistant executive director at The Academy in Pittsburgh before helping to open Summit Academy.

"John has been a fixture there," said Sam Costanzo, founder of The Academy Schools. "It's safe to say he's helped turn around the lives of hundreds of kids, probably thousands."

McCloud lives only three houses from the school — practically right on campus. He's available to the students there around the clock, seven days a week.

That's the way he wants it.

"I wasn't a bad kid, but I got into a little trouble myself," McCloud recalled of his high school days. "Chad Hannah came to Valley as a wrestling coach when I was there and he coached for 30 years. He was a tremendous influence on me.

"I knew kids in high school who found a lot of trouble and needed help. I went to a trade school after high school and saw more kids who needed help. When I was offered the position at Glen Mills, I knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to serve as a positive role model for kids.

"Trying to help kids get on the right path in life is not a job to me. It's my

passion. And when you're passionate about something, you're in it all the way," he added.

Costanzo described McCloud as a "leader for kids."

"He's very respectful of the students and they, in turn, are very respectful of him," Costanzo said. "John is able to provide his counseling through that leadership. Kids look up to him. They believe in him. And he doesn't let them down.

"John doesn't do a job. He lives it."

McCloud doesn't know what his win-loss record is as a coach, either.

"It's not important," he said, while easily summing up the most important days of his life.

"When a kid here is at his worst, I have to be at my best," he said. "Work with that kid, establish a trusting relationship, reach him in a positive way.

"Seeing kids leave here and begin productive lives as good members of society is very rewarding to me. You want to make a difference. Even if it doesn't work out every time. When you're passionate about something, you give all you've got no matter what.

"If it's going to make that kid's life a little better, why not?," he added.