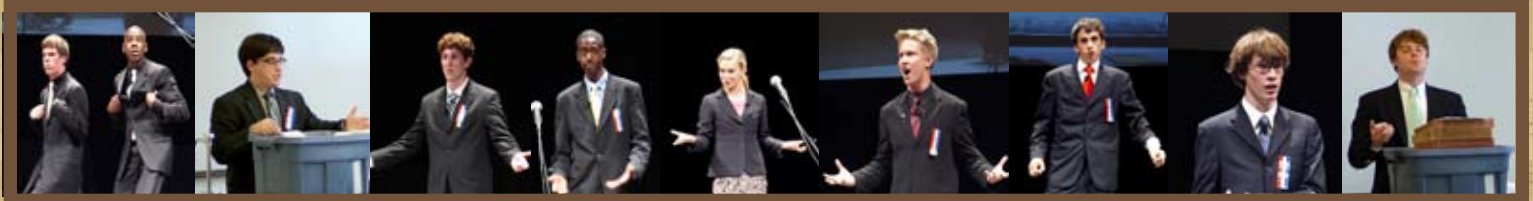


It's All About...

83 Years



of

Excellence

in

Speech and Debate

...How To Be a Happy NFL Alumnus

by Heidi Christensen, Alumni Coordinator

**You may be asking yourself: “as a lifetime member of the NFL, what can I do to be a happy NFL Alum?”
Below is an easy 12-step program that will help you answer that age old question...**

Step 1. **Sign up for the NFL Alumni Connection Program.**

If you get this magazine in your mailbox you have completed step one! Congratulations!

Step 2. **Let us get to know you.**

Tell us about what’s happening in your life. New marriage, children, or job? Are you moving? Heading off to get a Ph.D. or other degree? Keep us informed. We want to tell others of your good news.

Step 3. **Locate an NFL chapter in your town.**

Maybe you’ve moved far from your hometown high school speech and debate team. That’s okay...we have over 3,000 schools all across the country who need your help.

Step 4. **Now that you’ve located a speech/debate team in your town, VOLUNTEER!**

You can help set up a tournament, donate to the high school’s speech and debate team, judge, or even bake brownies for the judges’ lounge. Even the seemingly smallest of gestures can make a huge impact. Go to your local tournaments and support your team. Just being there can

mean so much. Or perhaps you work for or own a business that can give a donation to the tournament. Showing the community that you support the local team can really make an impact.



Step 5. **So you’ve watched the team and realized that you can do more...you can help coach!**

Every team needs extra experts around to help out. Even if you haven’t participated in years, you can talk to the team about your experiences and how it got you to where you are today. This alone is a great way to help the team’s coach.

Step 6. **Fundraising-There is not a team out there that does not need financial help.**

Maybe you know of a fundraising idea, or can help organize fundraising efforts at the high school. Any fundraising that you can help the students do will make a huge difference in which tournaments they can attend, how much they will have to pay to be part of the team, etc. A student should never be turned away from this great activity because he/she doesn’t have enough money to participate.

Step 7. **Write for us!**

We always welcome submissions to the Alumni Magazine and the *Rostrum* from our alumni. The article can be short or long, speech or debate related, autobiographical or simply educational. It’s really up to you! Maybe you have a great story about Nationals, or a strong belief about one particular topic. Submit those articles to us. We’d love to hear from you.



Step 8.
Write for them!

Write an article in your local and/or regional paper praising the efforts of your local speech and debate team. If you don't have a team in your own town, write about the benefits of having one!

Step 9.
If you don't have a team, go to your school board and request starting a team in your community.

Use our NFL resources to show the benefits of having a speech and/or debate team. Just think of the hundreds, even thousands of students that could benefit from your meeting with the school board.

Step 10.
Tell all your friends.

You may still be in contact with classmates and competitors. Tell them about the 12-step program and maybe you want to help them out with getting started and getting involved with the Alumni Connection Program.

Step 11.
Giving.

Our legacy can be secured by including the NFL in your financial plans. Donors can direct their gift to one particular area (i.e. coach education, student scholarships) or can be used for our general everyday costs. In addition to money, gifts can be property, retirement plans, charitable trusts, and life insurance.

Step 12.
Never forget.

Remember the great times you had while traveling with your team, hanging out in the cafeteria, competing against some of the best and brightest in the country. Keep the NFL in mind as often as you can...we are thinking of you!



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...Mentoring



Virgil Petrik mentoring a student

He received many honors during his career, including: Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities in 1958; Outstanding Young Men in American in 1966; the state "Distinguished Service Award" from South Dakota in 1979; "Outstanding School Board Member" by the Associated School Boards of South Dakota in 1980; "Community Service Award" from Mount Marty College in 1987; was chosen to present "Mother Jerome Schmitt Annual Lecture" in 1991; state "Distinguished Service Award" from South Dakota High School Activities Association in 1994; South Dakota's "Outstanding Speech Teacher Award" from the National Federal of Interscholastic Speech and Debate Associations in 1995; "Teacher of the Year Award" from Mount Marty College in 1995; Faculty Emeritus award from Mount Marty College in 1996; Who's Who Among America's Teachers in 1991; and was elected to the Pointer Hall of Fame in 1997.



Dr. D. MacKinnon with her mentor Andrew Buchan from the Western Washington District.

"Irene, South Dakota is in the panhandle of the state just sixty miles from Iowa, Nebraska and Minnesota. Attending high school there in the sixties did not challenge me until Virgil Petrik assumed the role of superintendent. Approximately 125 students attended grades 9-12, so he also taught history and coached debate. Only four girls joined the debate team and as one of them, I can testify it changed my life. At that time, Irene offered no AP classes. So to prepare for policy debate and extemporaneous speaking I spent every extra hour at the University of South Dakota Library. We went to state our first year and I went on to debate in college.

Fast forward over four decades to last year when I was asked to coach the first ever debate team at a high school opening for the first time. Kingston High School took seven years of planning. It is the second high school in the North Kitsap School District in the Puget

Sound region of Washington. Life coming full circle thrilled me and I threw myself into updating my knowledge. Debate had by December, I felt I was drowning in a pool of paperwork and the abyss of no funding. My confidence faltered until the NFL assigned Andrew Buchan of the Western Washington District as my mentor. Gradually, things started to work. Andrew always made me feel welcome. And by promptly answering my questions, he made our team feel welcomed into the Western Washington District as well.

Virgil Petrik dedicated his life to teaching and debate. Andrew Buchan is cut of the same cloth. I only regret it took me so long to rediscover debate. Thank you Andrew, for assisting Kingston High School in having a successful first year."

Dr. D. MacKinnon
Literacy Teacher/Speech & Debate Advisor
Kingston High School
Kingston, WA

Michelle Hill

When I signed my contract for my first “big kid job” in April of 2007, one of the first things I thought about was the New Mexico Speech and Debate Association State Tournament. How could I possibly hope to fill the void left by Meg Howell, a four-diamond NFL coach and a major presence in the state of New Mexico? I assured myself that I had months to worry about the issue...but my calendar now reveals that it is March...and state is upon us.

Drafts of this article have been in my giant teacher bag for weeks; but it is just now that I am sitting down to finish...on the first day of our state championships... during “registration.” You’ll notice that “registration” appears in quotation marks because we are certainly not sitting in the Student Union of Eastern New Mexico University. Instead, I am sitting in a hotel room at the Holiday Inn Express watching the snow fall and wondering how thirty-nine hungry students are going to find lunch in the wintry wonderland of Portales, New Mexico. No amount of pre-planning, scheduling or time management could have predicted that we would get snowed in less than a mile away from the tournament, anxiously awaiting updates from our friends on the road.

The last time I had a tournament snow day, I was the student. My biggest concern was “movie on free HBO or practice?” Now, I am emailing parents to let them know their children are safe, rationing bananas from the continental breakfast, making a practice schedule and (loudly) reminding students to stop slamming doors. While today’s events are difficult from a planning standpoint, they are not the first time that I have found myself frustrated at work. However, when these instances unexpectedly arise, I try to imagine my sixth-grade self, constantly berating my coach (Billye Lucas or Mom #2) with questions that I already knew the answers to, just to hear myself talk. When my impulse is to criticize after a student is not

memorized by a deadline, I try to remember the Friday afternoon when Mrs. Lucas handed small, twelve-year old me my first Humorous Interpretation script. On Monday morning, I excitedly told her that, “The teaser is memorized!” She calmly smiled and said, “Okay...now on to the other nine minutes.”



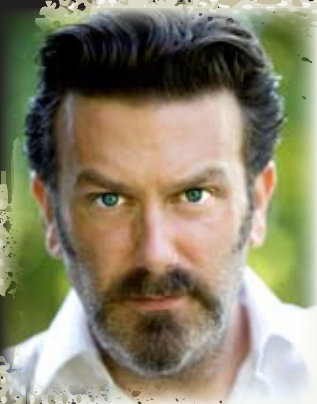
My days as a coach are filled with bus requisitions, frantic emails from parents and more accounting work than I was ever prepared for as an English major. But, as we have reached the near-end of our competitive season, I find myself reminiscing about the most memorable moments of my year. On the first day of school, Matt Ketai a recent graduate of Albuquerque Academy (and a 2007 NFL finalist) brought me coffee and pastries to wish me luck. Meg Howell (my mentor) answers all of my

emails and tells me which issues to worry about and which problems to laugh about. The Wednesday after my birthday, a sophomore on the team made me an intricate birthday cake that could easily feed fifty—after covertly ascertaining my favorite colors from other members of the team. Every Thursday, I watch as dedicated seniors explain to eager eighth graders that they should line interp binders up with their chins and double check the legs on visual aid stands...tricks I was taught just a few years ago.

Last week, I spent an hour watching my ninth grade Lincoln Douglas debaters explain competitive debate to home-schooled sixth graders. I had been nervous about the event for weeks, wondering whether my very competitive junior varsity squad would be too technical for a group completely new to debate. I was most impressed by my students willingness to simplify without belittling. I was so proud of my students—certainly not the first time this year. From the looks in the eyes of a few visiting guests, my ninth graders--so new to this crazy activity just seven months ago--sparked a level of interest that was once ignited in me.

Michelle Hill has been involved in competitive forensics for half of her life! She was a charter member of the National Junior Forensics League at St. Clement's Episcopal School in El Paso, Texas. She competed for Coronado High School and had a great time at rainy Portland NFLs! Upon graduation in 2002, she attended Illinois State University on an Individual Events scholarship and now is the Director of Forensics at Albuquerque Academy. Because she just can't get away from speech, she has spent summers working at UTNIF, FFI, InterProd and, most recently, GMIF.

..Alumni Success Stories



Jeremy Schwartz *The Voice of Comedy Central.*

If you have ever watched Comedy Central, then there is a good chance you have heard the voice of Jeremy Schwartz. Before Jeremy was a showbiz success story, though, he was a member of the NFL. He started competing in forensics in the 7th grade and continued all the way through graduation. He admits that going to classes wasn't always his favorite thing to do, but he knew if he went to class and made the grades, he could stay on the speech team. Jeremy graduated from Plano HS in Plano Texas in 1990 after being very successful in HI and DI under the guidance of Debbie Brantley and Charlotte English. Jeremy went to Nationals 3 times, taking third against another featured alumnus, Jen Kober.

Throughout his high school career Jeremy knew he wanted to be an actor. "I didn't like school, but I did want to be an actor. Everyone knew it; I was quite vocal about it. If it wasn't for the NFL I would have just gotten my GED. I thank the NFL and the coaches for my success today. Without them, who knows what I would be doing."

After high school Jeremy moved to Dallas, played in a band, waited tables and did what he loved -- theatre! While performing one night, a talent agent discovered him. Shortly afterward, he started doing voice-overs in Dallas.

Since then he has lived as a professional actor in New York City. He is the voice of Comedy Central as well as various campaigns for ESPN, HBO, CNBC, and A&E. He is also a founding member of The Fire Department Theatre Company in New York (see <http://thefiredept.org/index.html>). He has appeared in numerous television shows, commercials and movies, and recently completed the film "Staten Island" which is scheduled to be released in late April.

While Jeremy has come a long way from Plano, Texas, he has never forgotten what got him to where he is today. "I am incredibly blessed. I am so fortunate to have had such a great career." He is also very aware of the role NFL played in his success, explaining that, "The NFL taught me so much about acting. I never took theatre in high school and have always said that being part of the speech team was best acting training I have ever had. Charlotte English, probably the best acting teacher I have ever had! I was taught how to digest a script, how to crawl inside the mid of a play. That type of teaching has served me through my entire career!"

Jared Weiss *"Shape, Shell and Shine"*

For this NFL alum, going to speech tournaments on the weekends did not include piling onto a yellow school bus at 5am. However, it did include his mom and dad driving him from tournament to tournament across the state and country so he could compete. You see, his school didn't have a speech and debate team, so he created his own. "I wasn't going to do NFL in the beginning because I played basketball," he explains, "But I realized the scholarship money that was available and went after it!"

One of his greatest memories of NFL involved the Harvard tournament, where he was approached by a NFL alumnus who asked him to speak at his company's sales meeting. Jared was 16 years old -- even at such a young age he was getting noticed. Despite his aptitude for speech, he considered a couple of options after high school. At first, he was planning to go to college with a scholarship to play basketball. Unfortunately for the team, and fortunately for the rest of the world, he ended up needing double knee surgery. Sidelined from the court, he returned to speech.

At 21 Jared moved to New York with \$1,000 in his pocket and unbelievable determination to succeed. "I slept on the floor for 6 months...I sold gym memberships, all the while working on my company "madProper." Not too much later madProper is a fully developed and successful company. He has made appearances on Tim Gunn's Guide to Style and the Tyra Banks Show. Currently he is working on a book, expanding his program at Exhale Mind Spa, and trying to get into the Guinness Book of World Records.

Jared's whole concept is to make people realize they can't be a victim. "Every day you must love your body, look your best and have a great attitude....shape, shell and shine." He says we all know what's good for us, we just don't do it. I asked Jared what advice he would give to students who might think of starting their own business one day. "Take your ideas seriously. Just because you're a "kid" remember your thoughts, creativity, and ideas you have could be an instrumental part of society in the future. Never stop believing in you!"

For more information about Jared Weiss and madProper go to www.madproper.com





The Power of Giving

“You have not lived until you have done something for someone who can never repay you.”

-John Bunyan

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NFL Bruno E. Jacob
Youth Leadership Fund

www.nflonline.org/Alumni/AlumniDonate

...Support



Dr. Mike Edmonds
VP for Student Life/Dean of Students
Colorado College

Let us tenderly and kindly cherish, therefore, the means of knowledge. Let us dare to read, think, speak, and write.

—John Adams

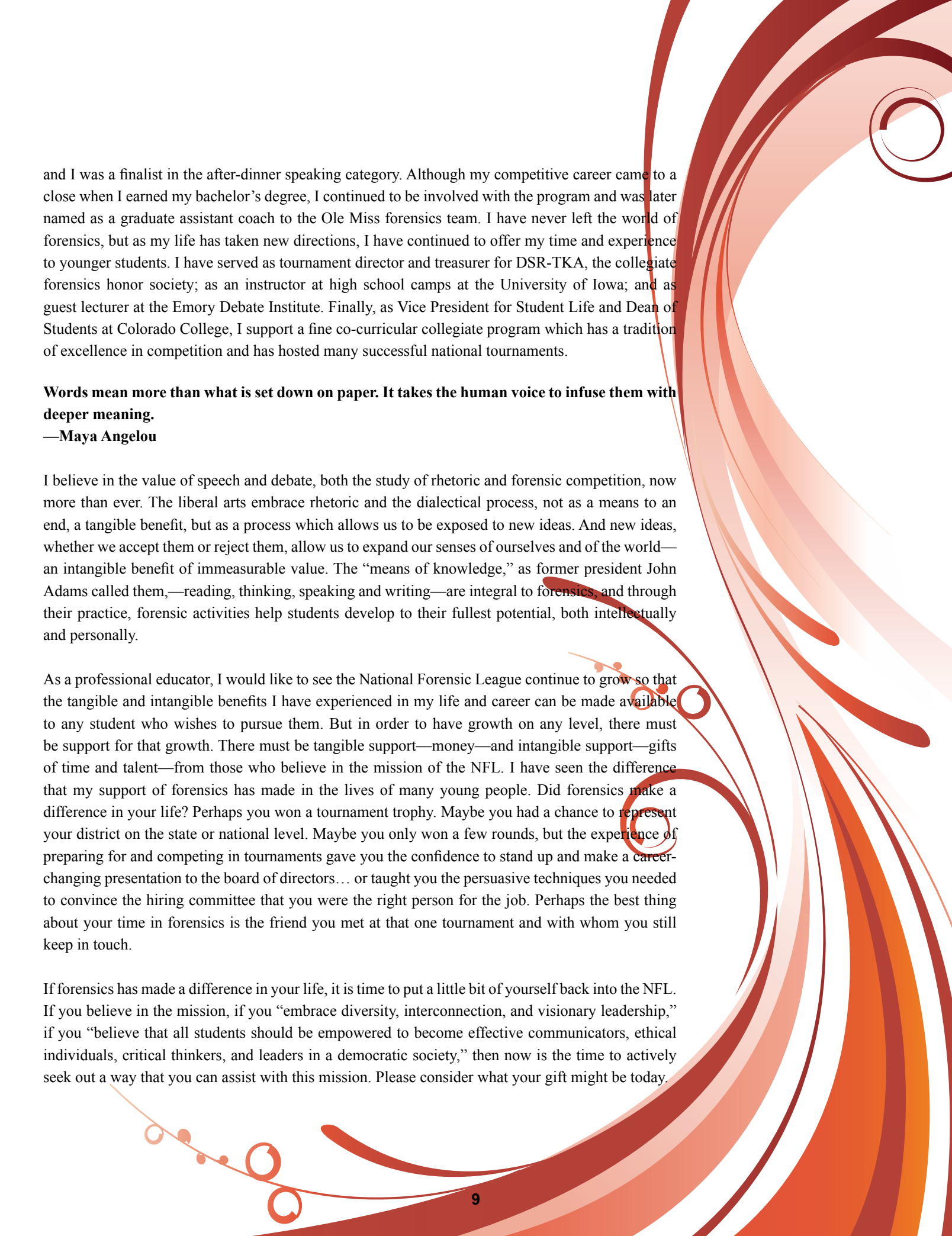
Forensics—speech and debate—is a thread which has held together various stages of my life for the better part of thirty years. In my roles as participant, coach, mentor and sponsor, I have benefited personally from my involvement in forensics in both tangible and intangible ways. However, it is not personal achievement which has spurred my continued involvement. I continue to give my time and my financial support to the National Forensic League because I believe in the mission of the organization and because I have seen the tangible and intangible benefits that I realized in my life make a difference in the lives of so many others. As a professional educator at a small, liberal arts college, I believe that the mission of the NFL to “embrace diversity, interconnection, and visionary leadership” and to “empower students to become effective communicators, ethical individuals, critical thinkers, and leaders in a democratic society” is a worthy mission, indeed.

Don't leave inferences to be drawn when evidence can be presented.

—Richard Wright

I began my forensics career in the 7th grade in Tennessee. At first, there weren't so many tangible benefits to my participation. In fact, it was a lot of hard work! Days of preparation and practice were followed by weekends spent in competition. There was no monetary reward, but I soon began to realize the intangible reward of the camaraderie borne among friendly competition. Extemporaneous speaking was fun! In high school, I continued to develop and refine my speaking skills under the direction of a wonderful mentor, Ms. Jane Eldridge, and those tangible benefits began to come my way. I won a number of high school tournaments and even placed second in the state of Tennessee in boys' extemp. And although I might not have recognized it at the time, I was accruing further intangible benefits: confidence in my ability to speak publicly and to persuade listeners to my point of view, among others.

When it was time to choose a college, I knew I wanted to be at an institution where I could study rhetoric and drama and continue to hone my speaking skills. I chose the University of Mississippi and then began a long affiliation with that fine institution, first as a student and later as an instructor and staff member. I'm proud to say that I was elected to the national student congress as a senator,



and I was a finalist in the after-dinner speaking category. Although my competitive career came to a close when I earned my bachelor's degree, I continued to be involved with the program and was later named as a graduate assistant coach to the Ole Miss forensics team. I have never left the world of forensics, but as my life has taken new directions, I have continued to offer my time and experience to younger students. I have served as tournament director and treasurer for DSR-TKA, the collegiate forensics honor society; as an instructor at high school camps at the University of Iowa; and as guest lecturer at the Emory Debate Institute. Finally, as Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students at Colorado College, I support a fine co-curricular collegiate program which has a tradition of excellence in competition and has hosted many successful national tournaments.

Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with deeper meaning.

—Maya Angelou

I believe in the value of speech and debate, both the study of rhetoric and forensic competition, now more than ever. The liberal arts embrace rhetoric and the dialectical process, not as a means to an end, a tangible benefit, but as a process which allows us to be exposed to new ideas. And new ideas, whether we accept them or reject them, allow us to expand our senses of ourselves and of the world—an intangible benefit of immeasurable value. The “means of knowledge,” as former president John Adams called them,—reading, thinking, speaking and writing—are integral to forensics, and through their practice, forensic activities help students develop to their fullest potential, both intellectually and personally.

As a professional educator, I would like to see the National Forensic League continue to grow so that the tangible and intangible benefits I have experienced in my life and career can be made available to any student who wishes to pursue them. But in order to have growth on any level, there must be support for that growth. There must be tangible support—money—and intangible support—gifts of time and talent—from those who believe in the mission of the NFL. I have seen the difference that my support of forensics has made in the lives of many young people. Did forensics make a difference in your life? Perhaps you won a tournament trophy. Maybe you had a chance to represent your district on the state or national level. Maybe you only won a few rounds, but the experience of preparing for and competing in tournaments gave you the confidence to stand up and make a career-changing presentation to the board of directors... or taught you the persuasive techniques you needed to convince the hiring committee that you were the right person for the job. Perhaps the best thing about your time in forensics is the friend you met at that one tournament and with whom you still keep in touch.

If forensics has made a difference in your life, it is time to put a little bit of yourself back into the NFL. If you believe in the mission, if you “embrace diversity, interconnection, and visionary leadership,” if you “believe that all students should be empowered to become effective communicators, ethical individuals, critical thinkers, and leaders in a democratic society,” then now is the time to actively seek out a way that you can assist with this mission. Please consider what your gift might be today.

...Desert Lights Nationals



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Call Heidi today for details!

Call 920-748-6206

or

Email Heidi at hschristensen@nflonline.org

Hotel Information

Hotels are listed in the current Rostrum found online at <http://www.nflonline.org/uploads/NationalTournament/TournamentLogistics> or at the host website, www.desertlights.org. Properties that can be booked online have the rate code for Desert Lights pre-loaded on the site. If a rate code is not pre-loaded, book by phone and be sure to give the rate code to the booking agent.

When calling hotels, it is important to mention the NFL Desert Lights National Speech Tournament block to receive the posted rate. Also, some properties have special instructions that are listed on the hotel grid provided.

All hotel properties are easily accessible and are within 15-20 minutes by highway or surface streets of every Monday-Friday competition venue. The host website has downloadable maps from every hotel to UNLV, McCarran Airport, and the five competition sites. You can print all needed maps before ever leaving home.

The Sponsors' Hotel is the South Point Hotel and Casino. This hotel is an excellent choice in both price and features. The South Point boasts a 64 lane bowling alley, 16 screen movie theater, and an incredible video arcade.

Key Travel Times to Note:

- * All Hotels to High Schools (Less than 15 min)
- * Green Valley HS to Foothill HS (Less than 15 minutes)
- * Each Middle School is less than 10 minutes from each High School and one another.
- * UNLV is only 15-20 minutes from all hotels.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE TOURNAMENT LOGISTICS

The "Desert Lights" will be an excellent location for the 2008 LFG/NFL National Speech Tournament. To make planning a little easier, the National Office is happy to provide a preliminary overview of the tournament. Please keep in mind that all logistics are tentative and subject to slight changes.

Sunday (Registration)

This year, the tournament registration and NFL vending EXPO will take place on Sunday, June 15th from 8am to 3pm at the Student Center on the campus of UNLV. In addition to the normal registration events, the local host committee has planned an incredible afternoon of events near the student union.

Monday and Tuesday (Preliminary Rounds/Early Elims/Schwan Event)

There will be five venues used for the preliminary competition. Foothill High School will host the preliminary rounds and early elim rounds of Policy Debate. Green Valley High School will host the preliminary rounds and early elim rounds of Public Forum Debate and U.S. and International Extemporaneous Speaking. Mannion Middle School will host preliminary and early elim rounds of Lincoln-Douglas Debate. Greenspun Middle School will host the preliminary and early elim rounds of Duo and HI. Bob Miller Middle School will host the preliminary and early elim rounds of DI and OO. The National Student Congress will be held at the College of Southern Nevada adjacent to Foothill High School.

All main event preliminary and early elimination competition on Monday and Tuesday will occur between 8am and 6pm.

The Schwan Event will take place near the two high schools at the state-of-the-art Henderson Pavilion in the evening on Tuesday. Students eliminated from main event competition on Tuesday will re-register for the Wednesday supplemental events at the Schwan Event.

Wednesday (Elimination Rounds/Supplemental Events)

There will be two venues used on Wednesday, June 18th. Students who qualify for elimination Round 9 of Policy, Lincoln Douglas, or Public Forum will compete at Foothill High School on Wednesday. All main event speech competitors (HI, DI, DUO, OO, USX, IX) who have qualified for round 9 will compete at Foothill High School. The National Student Congress semifinals will be held at the College of Southern Nevada adjacent to Foothill High School. Those students re-registered for supplemental events (Expository, Commentary, Prose, and Poetry) will compete at Green Valley High School on Wednesday. All students eliminated prior to round 9 of speech and debate events as well as, the prelims of Student Congress will have the opportunity to re-register and compete in up to two supplemental events (if pre-registered).

All competition will occur between 8am and 7pm on Wednesday.

Thursday (Elim Rounds/Supp/Cons Events/Interp Finals/Diamond Awards)

On Thursday morning, debate elimination rounds will continue at the Foothill High School complex. The National Student Congress will hold its final round sessions at the Cox Pavilion on the campus of UNLV. All supplemental and consolation events will occur at Green Valley High School.

On Thursday evening, attendees will enjoy the national final rounds of Humorous Interp., Dramatic Interp., and Duo Interp, as well as the Schwan Coaches' Diamond Ceremony at the Cox Pavilion on the campus of UNLV.

Friday (Supp, Cons, and Main Event Finals and National Awards Assembly)

The remaining Main Event final rounds (Original Oratory, U.S. Extemp, International Extemp., Lincoln-Douglas, Policy, and Public Forum), as well as, the Supplemental and Consolation Event finals will be held throughout the day on Friday at the Cox Pavilion on the campus of UNLV.

On Friday evening, the National Awards Assembly will be held in the Cox Pavilion at UNLV.

If you have any major questions about the logistics of the Desert Lights Nationals should feel free to contact the National Office at 920-748-6206 or at nfl@nflonline.org.

Desert + Lights



THE NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE



20 YEARS FROM NOW,
YOU'LL ARGUE THIS IS WHERE YOU
EMERGED AS A GREAT LEADER.
AND NO ONE WILL DARE REBUT YOU.

WHERE WILL THE NFL
TAKE YOUR FUTURE?

.....

MEDIA MOGUL

.....

TOP JOURNALIST

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SUPREME COURT
JUSTICE

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PRESIDENT OF THE
UNITED STATES

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... History



The National Forensic League has a long tradition of excellence. As the nation's oldest and largest debate and speech honor society, the organization has enrolled members in all fifty states, U. S. possessions and several foreign countries. NFL Alumni number in the millions. Prominent NFL alumni include past Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the United States, numerous Senators, Emmy and Academy Award winners, and celebrated media personalities. Equally important to us, countless other alumni have become experts in medicine, law, business, and education. In fact, many former NFL competitors have paid us the ultimate compliment by becoming forensic educators themselves and directing their own NFL programs.

NFL also has demonstrated contributions to academic success. Research has demonstrated that NFL alumni have impressive grade point averages, achieve higher college entrance exam scores, and attain higher levels of education than their counterparts. Members emerge with superior communication and critical thinking skills, a vast network of friends and mentors, and self-confidence to handle any challenges they face. Many also complete their NFL eligibility with one of NFL's \$153,000 worth of college scholarships, ready to make a lasting mark on their environment. Historically, few activities can boast of the tremendous contributions to membership development that NFL has made.

What do we do with such a rich history? History is valuable, of course, in that it can provide members of our community with a sense of belonging. As alumni of the NFL, we know that we are part of a vast and diverse community committed to speech and debate education. We can also look to stories from the past to

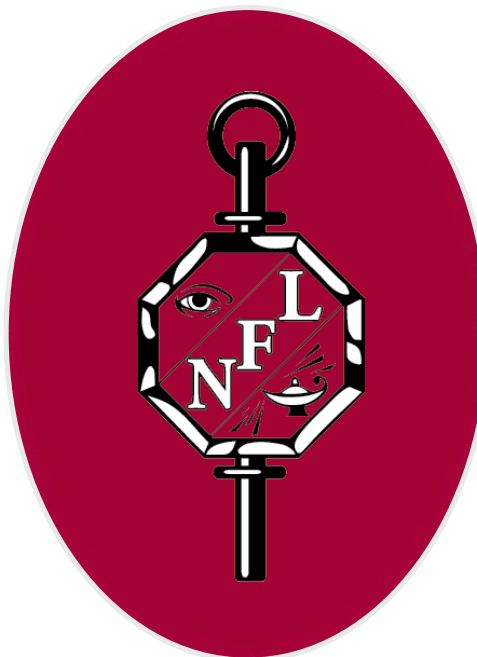
motivate us in the present. Who isn't moved by stories of self-sacrificial coaches, debate partners that seem like family members, and benevolent fellow competitors who teach us that forensics is much more than a competition? We can look to the successes of the past to gain momentum for future

students are active members, led by over 6500 high school teachers. Long after our hand-lettered membership certificates have begun to fade and our trophies have begun to tarnish, new generations of NFL members will need the same speech and debate education we have received. They will want to hear not of our past, but of our contemporary relevance. It is our responsibility, as beneficiaries of forensics, to build on the success of a long line of coaches, educators and students. Perhaps we can judge local programs, encourage our own children to participate in forensics, or provide opportunities to new generations of NFL members through contributions to the Bruno E. Jacob Youth Leadership fund. Whatever we decide to do, our future is just as important, if not more so, as where we have been. We must be committed to giving back to the community that has given so much to us.

Now that you have read through this Alumni Connection, pause to remember the good times in NFL; the friends you made, the changes you encountered, the excitement of performing in front of an attentive room, and the joy you felt when your diligence was rewarded. Then turn your mind to the future. What can you take from your history that can encourage, support, and affirm today's NFL? How will your history fill a need that no other person can fill in building leaders for tomorrow?

The NFL has a long tradition of excellence, but there is still much to do. Let's use our collective experience to motivate and inspire others and keep our vibrant history alive.

*-Jennifer Corum Billman
NFL member at Logan County HS,
1998-2001*



endeavors, or justify future support from our administrations. In a world where people want proof of our success, we have eighty-three years of proof. Our long list of successful alumni, our rich and storied history, our millions of lives touched - all of these things speak for themselves.

However, we can never be satisfied with our history, no matter how remarkable it is. Currently over 93,000 high school

Established 1925

...Philanthropy

Dan Peril
NFL Member at Plano Senior HS



Hello! My name is Dan Peril and I felt compelled to share how forensics was the catalyst for my personal growth as well as my career. When I was a Freshman at Vines High School in Plano, Texas, I was a student in a class taught by Debbie Brantley (Ladis). Ms. Brantley exposed the class to Lincoln-Douglas Debate and brought in a former student to demonstrate. I remember being absolutely captivated with the debate and I was immediately hooked. I became a member of the National Forensic League.. I remember the impact that my initial competitions made on my behavior, in general. I was a fairly shy kid. I absolutely didn't like speaking in front of a group of people! However, when I started enjoying some success at tournaments, I couldn't get enough of socializing and competing.

After Vines, I competed for the very competitive Plano Senior High School Speech and Debate team, led by Jim Long and Charlotte English. Participating on the Plano team elevated me to great heights, as I was surrounded by support and amazing talent. In fact, I competed along with the 1989 Extemporaneous NFL National Champion, Suzie Sprague. My successes in high school, and especially my participation in forensics, led me to a scholarship offer to compete on the University of Oklahoma Speech and Debate Team, where I competed with a top-10 national team. My time in forensics is the primary reason why I have been able to navigate my way through the workforce, as well. Currently, I am the Vice President of IT Recruitment and University Relations for Countrywide Financial Corporation, a Fortune 200 company. I use the skills I obtained in forensics every day of my life.

One day, back in December of last year, I started to reflect on my forensics memories with a good friend. At that very moment, I knew it was my responsibility to give back to the community which gave so much to me. I sent an e-mail to Heidi Christensen at the NFL asking if there were any tournaments in the area I might be able to judge. Heidi returned my e-mail immediately. The same day, I heard from one of the coaches at my alma mater, Plano Senior High School, Karen Wilbanks. I judged a tournament that weekend and have judged a couple of tournaments, including the Texas Forensics Association State Tournament. I have also volunteered at Plano Senior High School by critiquing the Plano extempers (coached by Cheryl Potts), prior to the state tournament. Judging these tournaments and volunteering at Plano has been such an amazing experience; however, it is only the start of what I feel that I need to do. I have pledged a monetary commitment to the NFL over the next 5 years. In fact, I am also utilizing my company's matching program to supplement the donations I will be giving to the NFL. The reason I chose to give back was very simple.... Forensics changed my life, period. I would not be the person I am without this activity.

It is my hope that my time and financial support to the NFL will go a long way in helping its members enjoy successful academic and working careers. I know that there is a great deal of work to be accomplished in order to spread the word to Corporate America and beyond. I hope that my volunteering and the money I can contribute will help someone kick-start their adult life, as well. When I was a high school student competing in forensics, I never imagined the profound impact that the activity would make on my life. It is my obligation to make sure that as many competitors realize this impact as possible.

I call on every member of the NFL to reflect on their time in forensics and ask yourself how participation in forensics enriched your life. It is absolutely vital that we give back to the organization that gave so much to us. Volunteer to assist coaches with a local high school team. Judge a tournament. Think philanthropically! Your time, energy, effort and any amount of money can go a long way. Calvin Coolidge once stated, "No person was ever honored for what he received. Honor has been the reward for what he gave." Let's all honor these hard-working competitors by giving back to something that gave so much to us.

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