

## Show the right kind of support from the stands

*By Karissa Niehoff, Executive Director of the National Federation of State High School Associations and Thomas Neubauer, Executive Director of the Delaware Interscholastic Athletic Association.*

Families and supporters of high school athletes here in Delaware, this message is for you.

When you attend an athletic event that involves your student athlete, cheer to your heart's content, enjoy the camaraderie that high school sports offer and have fun. These are great behaviors to model for our children. However, how you interact with game officials, players from all teams, fans and coaches sets an important example, too.

Your passion and support are admired. So is your self-control and respect.

According to a recent survey by the National Association of Sports Officials, more than 75 percent of all high school officials say "adult behavior" is the primary reason they quit. And 80 percent of all young officials hang up their stripes after just two years.

There is also a ripple effect. There are more officials over 60 than under 30 in many areas. And as older, experienced officials retire, there aren't enough younger ones to replace them. If there are no officials, there are no games. The shortage of licensed high school officials is severe enough in some areas that athletic events are being postponed or cancelled—especially at the freshman and junior varsity levels.

Research confirms that participation in high school sports and activities instills a sense of pride in school and community, teaches lifelong lessons like the value of teamwork and self-discipline and facilitates the physical and emotional development of those who participate. So, if the games go away because there aren't enough men and women to officiate them, the loss will be infinitely greater than just a score on the scoreboard.

Positive and impactful role models at high school athletic events here in Delaware are always welcome. If you would like to be a part of the solution to the shortage of high school officials, you can sign up to become a licensed official at [HighSchoolOfficials.com](http://HighSchoolOfficials.com). Or you can call (302) 857-3365 for information on how to become a high school official in Delaware.



Karissa Niehoff      Thomas Neubauer  
NFHS Executive Director      DIAA Executive Director