



# NEWSLETTER

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## ONLINE TICKETS

Online tickets for TSSAA championship events are available via GoFan.com. Member schools can sell tickets electronically during the regular season! For more information, contact [pnoles@huddleinc.com](mailto:pnoles@huddleinc.com).



## MAGIC OF STEPHEN HAS IMPACT BEYOND WORDS

Sometimes, a picture shows what no words can.

And yet, also, a letter filled with words from the heart can paint an image that resonates far beyond any still image.

Like the one the Tennessee Secondary School Athletics Association received from Tony Clower, Middle School Supervisor of Roane County Schools, in January 2018:



*"Mr. Childress, I just sat in on Stephen's presentation this morning at Midway High School. He has been in several of our schools this week. After sitting in on his presentation this morning, I do not know why every school in this state wouldn't have him in their school. It is without a doubt the most powerful student assembly we can offer our students. Thank you and the TSSAA for helping make this available. I sat and watched 9th graders not move a muscle or make a sound as Stephen shared his life story; very moving and powerful. Thanks again!"*

There are a bevy of these emails and letters through the years, emanating from the impact of The Right Team and the Magic of Stephen.

But what is The Right Team and who is Stephen? Well, take a look at the words of former TSSAA Executive Director Ronnie Carter as you consider those questions.

"The impact is statewide and the impact is bigger than sports," Carter says. "Sometimes we think sports is the end-all and the greatest thing going, but then you realize the impact of this program is the world. Stephen's the most visible person in the TSSAA, the

best thing we've got going and the impact is beyond words."

The program traces its roots to the 1990s and a partnership at the time with Baptist Hospital to blend Bargatz's world-class entertainer skills – his opening credits include Garth Brooks and Barbara Mandrell – with a transcendent message. The program is now sponsored by the Tennessee Highway Safety Office.

The Right Team and Magic of Stephen is rooted in the following tenets, per its mission statement:

- Student leadership development
- Alcohol, tobacco and drug prevention education
- Conflict resolution/violence prevention/bullying
- Sportsmanship and citizen education
- Driver safety
- Suicide education

Suicide. It might be a tougher subject than drugs for many to broach, and yet Bargatz speaks it from the heart.

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## DISTINGUISHED SERVICE RECOGNITION

There are no dusty trophies or faded letterman's jackets that Maurice 'Mo' Patton points to as foundation in his sportswriting career spanning four decades.

Rather, Patton's approach emanates from a passion for sports and a desire to chronicle the achievements and hard work of young people and their coaches, particularly at the high school level in the state of Tennessee.

It's why Patton is a TSSAA Distinguished Service Award winner for the 2019-20 year.

"I loved sports but I just couldn't play sports, and I worked all through high school," says Patton, a member of Franklin High School's last graduating class before Brentwood High School opened.

"There are kids, coaches, programs that deserve to be covered and if you're going to do it, you want to try to do your best. You don't want to half-step on anything. They give their best effort, and you want to try to give yours."

Beginning his college days first at Lambuth, then at MTSU in pursuit of an accounting degree, Patton remembers toiling in some part-time work with the Blue Raiders' sports information department before catching a break with the Murfreesboro Daily News Journal.

"I just kind of fell into it," says Patton, now a lead writer for the Columbia Daily Herald after stints with the DNJ, The (Franklin) Review-Appeal, Tennessean and his own web site. "The Daily News Journal asked me what I was doing and if I could help out one weekend. I started working part-time there, parlayed that into a full-time gig at the Review-Appeal in my hometown and spent three years there before I went to the Tennessean in February 1990."

Patton isn't sure if it's his first-ever reporting assignment for the DNJ, but he remembers horsing around for one of his earliest projects.

"I don't know if it was the first thing, but the first major thing I covered was a walking horse show there in Murfreesboro, and that is a big deal in that area and it was an even bigger deal back then," Patton says. "I was out there for three or four nights trying to dig up features and tacking results on the back-end. It was a big deal even though it was the low-man on the totem pole stuff."

"I went from there to doing some football on Friday nights, some MTSU stuff, did some women's basketball, that's when MTSU women's basketball was really good, when Jim Davis went from there to Clemson (as women's basketball coach)."

Patton's career includes plenty of time on major college beats and Nashville Sounds professional baseball, among a versatile writing toolbox.

Still, his passion remains for covering the state's high school scene, seeing future husbands and wives and coaches and leaders develop into adults.

"I just think that, at the high school level, you're dealing with a lot of kids who are truly playing for the love of the game," Patton says. "Not necessarily playing for 'does my scholarship or education depend on it?'. They're playing because they love playing. I like highlighting those kids, finding those kids, and I've always enjoyed the multi-sport athlete in particular."

"I like the kids willing to put themselves out there and try."



## TSSAA PROMOTES SPORTSMANSHIP AND PURPOSE IN SPORTS

October 28, 2019 will be another important day for education-based athletics in Tennessee as the Tennessee Titans will host another day of InsideOut Initiative workshops for schools across the state. More than 100 schools have attended at least one training since the initiative began last year and about 100 faculty members attended the first meeting of the year last month, but as Bernard Childress, executive director of TSSAA says, there's room for many more schools to become involved.

"With some of the things that we're seeing lately, I feel like high school sports and youth sports in general hasn't necessarily gotten out of control, but if we don't turn this around it could be headed in the wrong direction," Childress said. "We want everyone involved in educational athletics to take a critical look at the definition of winning. The InsideOut program does this and helps coaches to be transformational coaches."



The goal of playing sports is to win, Childress insists, but the purpose, he says, is different.

"Everybody wants to win; no one goes into a game intending to lose. Winning is the goal, but the purpose of sports is to teach character, teamwork and healthy lifestyles. Those things should happen regardless of what the scoreboard shows."

Childress hopes that every school and school district in the state will become involved in the program.

"We're very concerned about sportsmanship; that's a major part of what we do. And also, a part of sportsmanship, is encouraging ethics, integrity and character. Those things have got to be instilled in young people and our schools have a responsibility to help do that."

School principals or other administrators who have questions about the InsideOut Initiative should contact Mark Reeves at the TSSAA office.

## MAGIC: PROGRAM FOCUSES ON STRUGGLES OF YOUTH

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A world champion magician whose son, Nate, is a best-selling stand-up comedian with his own Netflix special and tour, Stephen hits the suicide talk head-on because he is a survivor of a suicide attempt. Two of them, if we're being exact.

"When I was in high school, I attempted suicide twice," says Bargatze, between performances during one state barnstorming tour last month. "One time, it was probably just to get noticed and one time it was very serious. I believe in all my heart that if not for God, I would not be here. Through all that, I ended up in Nashville with my cousin Ron. He brought me in, took me to his house and, really, he showed me what a normal family is.

"So I get to share about my life and what I was going through when I tried to take my life. And it's really been life-changing to me with this program. I had a kid one time tell me, 'I was going to do it today' and he said, 'Thank you for coming, you stopped me.' I kept in contact with that kid for more than a year afterwards. And I'll still hear from him and others, who get ahold of me and say, 'Thanks.'"

"I think he has turned a bad situation into a positive and had such an positive impact on other peoples' lives," says Courtney Brunetz, TSSAA's Director of Marketing and Coordinator of the Right Team and Magic of Stephen. "He can relate to these kids. We don't know all that they're going through. He's been there and can relate. He's real.

"He's a big-time magician, performed for famous people, won national and world competitions, been invited to the White House for Easter, but he's so down to earth. He's had a hard road and has been through it and gotten to the other side and now he's able to share with kids and make them see there's a way out."

Schools across Tennessee simply send an email to Brunetz ([marketing@tssaa.org](mailto:marketing@tssaa.org)) to get the wand waving on scheduling Bargatze's act; not that organizations necessarily need to plant roots in Tennessee for Bargatze to perform.

Some years ago, Steve Endsley was seeking an end-of-the-year speaker for his Illinois Elementary School Association's school-year-ending celebratory luncheon.

Doing his friend a solid, Carter suggested Bargatze. Endsley wasn't so sure. Thirteen years later, nobody has usurped Bargatze's spot at the event.

"Stephen's story is incredible and for him to relate his story to junior high kids so that they can understand people do have struggles and do overcome their struggles and be successful is what Stephen does so well," Endsley says. "Somehow, he gets his message across to kids and they totally understand

and are able to relate to him. I've been so fortunate to have him be our speaker at a student recognition event for 13 consecutive years and I'm already looking forward to it again.

Why does Endsley find that the Right Team and Magic of Stephen message resonates annually? Mostly because it is timeless. Cool kids, popularity and life struggles aren't once-in-a-generation; they're every single one.



"I think what Stephen does, is he is able to communicate to kids that it's OK if you're struggling a little bit. It's OK that things aren't going your way, and if they are not going your way, ask for help and it's OK to ask for help," Endsley explains. "And if things are going your way, and this is where I think the real value comes in, when you see someone struggling, you go help that person. In essence, he is saying to those who are popular, you need to help others and to those who don't seem as popular, it's OK."

It is the kids who linger, not necessarily always the ones whom Bargatze incorporates into his program, who keep the veteran showman relentlessly engaged in helping youth.

"You know, the rewarding part is not only is it my passion but I think that it's my purpose," Bargatze, whose father was an abusive alcoholic, shares. "It always goes back to being that kid that was lost and didn't know what I was doing here on Earth. It's sharing that story and connecting with kids going through some of the same things I went through. This is what I should be doing, this is what my purpose is. And the bottom line kind of hidden in all that, I want people to also realize that TSSAA is a great group of people that cares about them.

"When I was a little kid, I was left-handed. I went to Catholic school and they used to beat us for being left-handed. I threw with the wrong hand because I didn't want the teacher to hit me, and he said, 'Hey man, you throw like a girl.' I didn't know it was OK to be left-handed. I just thought I wasn't smart enough to use my right hand.

"My junior year, I was helping clean rocks off the football field and they said they needed some kid to be in underwear and dance around in a play. My class was just background people, but my teacher turned to me and said, 'Hey kid, you're funny, will you do this?' It was really the first time I heard that kind of laughter where you say, 'OK. This is good, this is what I want.' It changed the course of my life, that one little experience. And it reminds me how simple our words are. Two teachers, one said you throw like a girl and one said hey you're funny. Both impacted my life."

It's part sleight of hand, part commandment of heart. "Help others."

*by John Brice for TSSAA News*



### Equipment and procedure modifications coming to basketball rules in 2019-20

Five of the seven rules changes in high school basketball concern player equipment, including new uniform provisions that will be required in the 2024-25 season.

According to the 2018-19 NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, basketball is the third-most popular sport for boys with 551,373 participants in 18,510 schools and the third-most popular sport for girls with 412,407 participants in 18,171 schools.

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### Nearly 150 live sporting events streamed this month on NFHS Network

Dozens of schools across the state are live streaming varsity, junior varsity and freshmen sports each week of the NFHS Network. Watching the games are easy, whether it's on your computer, tablet or smartphone. Click below for this week's schedule of events.

Contact Matt Abramson at [matt.abramson@nfhsnetwork.com](mailto:matt.abramson@nfhsnetwork.com) to find out how your school can become a part of the NFHS Network.

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### Sports Medicine Advisory group meets in Hermitage

TSSAA hosted a meeting in Hermitage Wednesday of its Sports Medicine Advisory Committee to discuss a broad range of health and safety topics relevant to middle and high schools in Tennessee.

The group reviewed and provided feedback concerning current TSSAA policies such as the heat policy and heat illness prevention, concussion policy and severe weather guidelines.

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### Injury concerns addressed with wrestling rules changes for 2019-20

In an ongoing effort to minimize the risk of injury in high school wrestling, additional time will be given to evaluate head and neck injuries when an appropriate health-care professional is present at a match.

According to the 2017-18 NFHS High School Athletics Participation Survey, wrestling is the seventh-most popular sport for boys with 245,564 participants in 10,775 schools. In addition, there were 16,562 girls who participated in wrestling in 2,351 schools.

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