

RGHS Poms Coach Christina Leone wins prestigious coaching award

By Lisa Nicklanovich; photo courtesy of Mark Wilkins Photography

Rock Canyon High School (RGHS) Poms Coach Christina Leone recently won Positive Coaching Alliance's Double-Goal Coach award for striving to succeed while also pursuing the more important goal of teaching life lessons through sports. Leone has coached RGHS Poms for seven years.

Leone was nominated by assistant varsity coach Erin Markin and was selected from 2,100 nominees across the country. One of only two coaches selected from Colorado to receive this award, Leone attended an awards ceremony in Palo Alto, California in April.

Leone said, "The challenge for all dance coaches is that we coach a subjective sport. It's a totally different mindset in that you can't quantify what you do. I strive to find the balance between taking some risk with our performances and knowing the talent pool and level of confidence. Doing what your team can do well is always the better choice."

Poms is year-round and the team performs at many school events in addition to participating in competitions. Leone's approach is to invest in the seniors and captains of the team and create leadership from within. "The dynamic of the team means everything to me and it's what makes each team special. I ask the leaders to have a pulse on the team. I believe it's up to them to participate mentally and not just follow directions; I remind the girls that what they put in is what they will get out."

Leone and her coaches, Amanda Gesell, Paige Hesen, and Erin Marken meet with each girl on the team individually pre-, mid-, and post-season to evaluate what is going well and what to work on. This line of communication not only helps with goal setting and expectations but also establishes a connection with each girl.

Lexi Vanderhill, a junior on the team said, "Coach Christina is completely dedicated to



The RGHS Poms coaching staff at State. Pictured left to right: Paige Hesen, Christina Leone, Erin Marken, and Amanda Gesell. Leone won the prestigious Double-Goal Coach award from Positive Coaching Alliance for striving to win while also building team leaders with character. Leone was chosen from 2,100 nominees because of her approach to building leaders within the program and incorporating life lessons into the dance program.

making us better. She spends countless hours putting together the best dances and coming up with ways to make us a stronger team. While that is important, I think the reason she won this award is because she's not solely focused on building us as dancers, but also on helping us develop a strong character and learn life lessons. I look up to her tremendously."

Leone said, "I'm honored to receive this award, but we have the positive program we do because I'm surrounded by good people. It's a group effort and our coaching staff is like a team in itself. We have each other to share the lows and celebrate the highs. The administration at

RGHS has also been incredibly supportive and encouraging of the girls and the team."

Leone is a realtor at LIV Sotheby's in Castle Pines Village, is married, and has two young girls, who also dance. In addition to coaching, Leone travels the country and judges dance competitions, so she truly respects other high school dance coaches and the subjective nature of the competitions.

For more information on the RGHS Poms team, visit www.rchsjags.com. For more information on Positive Coaching Alliance, visit www.positivecoach.org.

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