

HONORING AND REMEMBERING STEPHEN UKELE

When our oldest son decided to wrestle in high school, we had almost as much to learn as he did. Luckily, wrestling parents, like Ken and Judy Georg and Morris and Arlinda Rokey, took us under their wing and taught us what WE needed to know to survive.

Luke's freshman year was tough—I mean for us! Waiting for him to get on the mat was a long wait since he was a heavyweight. We joined in and cheered all the wrestlers on as we waited and then Luke his turn. Needless to say, the first year was a struggle for a wrestler with no prior experience. Luke lost every match. In the first period. However, after many of those short matches we would watch the winner take time to talk to him, give him advice and suggestions. I know of no other sport like it. Luckily, with the help of his coaches and teammates, he managed to make it to State his sophomore and senior years. And if you ask Luke today what he learned from wrestling, he will give you a rendition of adjectives such as courage, giving, discipline, goal management and perseverance.

From the Team USA website, I read, "It's no secret that wrestling is hard. Saying only the strong survive may be a cliché, but it's true. The great thing about wrestling is that it teaches more than just how to compete as an athlete and in sport. It also teaches life lessons, on and off the mat. Wrestling teaches values that last a lifetime, go far beyond winning or losing, and set the foundation for a rewarding career in athletics, and success in life."

Through the Greater Sabetha Community Foundation, Pam Ukele and children Anna Ukele Weiser and Ryan Haug, established a scholarship fund in honor of Stephen Ukele to assist members of the Kids Wrestling Program with money for college as well as with monetary help to attend wrestling camps. Stephen helped found the Sabetha Kids Wrestling Club, where he was a coach and referee for more than 25 years. Stephen was incredibly youth oriented and served an important role mentoring local kids.

This summer, Coach Ricky Creek and Eric Rokey traveled with 10 wrestlers to Askren Wrestling Academy in Hartland, Wisconsin. Two of these wrestlers were awarded scholarships to pay for the camp registration from the Stephen Ukele Scholarship Fund. Commenting on the experience, Coach Creek said, "Camp was an amazing time where we were able to learn 50+ wrestling techniques and got lots of quality time together as a team. The wrestlers gained wisdom from some of the best college wrestlers and coaches in the country, and the payoff for their willingness to commit a week to camp will be evident come February!"

Because the Stephen Ukele scholarship is a fund within the Greater Sabetha Community Foundation, donations to the fund are accepted anytime at www.sabethafoundation.org. This fund is available during the annual Give to Grow Match Day as well.

The Greater Sabetha Community Foundation exists to enhance the quality of life through philanthropic giving, build relationships between donors and community needs, and provide service with accountability, integrity, quality, respect, and transparency.

