

In the Arena

MISSION, VISION, IMPLEMENTATION and HOMAGE

MISSION

In the Arena's mission is to change the trajectories of the lives of American youths by deploying in their communities today's elite athletes, who teach them how to make habits of self-inquiry, accountability, leadership and achievement.

In the Arena constituents, including Arena Athletes, Board Members, supporters, staff and program participants, are committed to the following **guiding principles**:

Everybody is a role model.

Unlike Charles Barkley, we believe everybody is a role model, *especially* those who don a uniform and step into the arena of competition. Now we'd never make the case that everyone is a *positive* role model, of course; sometimes we learn more from anti-heroes than we do from heroes. But In the Arena holds steadfastly to the belief that we all learn by observing and modeling the behavior we see on display. Accordingly, it is incumbent upon each and every one of us to set the best possible examples as we move through our lives.

Character and integrity are paramount and teachable traits.

Character and integrity are at the core of In the Arena's ethos and inform every stage of our policy, strategy and tactics. Indeed, we've placed these traits at the cornerstone of our programming; if no other skill is inculcated in Arena program participants but an increased awareness of the importance of these ideas in action, then we will be running a verifiably successful organization.

Excellence is worth pursuing.

We screen for a commitment to excellence at every level of In the Arena: we look for it in Arena Athletes; we seek it in Board Members; we prize it in contributors; we value it in our staff and we encourage it in our program participants.

Civic engagement is a joy and a necessity.

In the Arena aims to create and perpetuate an understanding of the role of the individual in the overall health of the whole by underscoring the broad and immeasurably positive impact of civic engagement on both the individual and the community. As Teddy Roosevelt suggests in his now-famous speech, "Citizenship in a Republic": "The average citizen must be a good citizen if our republics are to succeed."

Our mission statement coupled with our guiding principles establish the foundation of In the Arena and function as touchstones for In the Arena as it moves forward:

We harness the power of the elite athlete to magnetize the attention of American youth, and through methodical anchoring of the highest-caliber *role models* in American communities, we work to inculcate in today's youth a development of *character and integrity*, a *thirst for excellence* and a pervasive appreciation for the merits of *civic engagement*.

VISION

In the Arena's vision is to leverage the uplifting power of sport to effect lasting and meaningful change in today's youth, with the aim of giving all young Americans equal access to the highest caliber role models and the best chance at success in the long-term.

It's this last phrase, "the best chance at success," that we have squarely in our crosshairs for both the short and the long-term. Advisor and friend Kevin Guthrie, a two-time Academic All-American at Princeton who earned a tryout in the NFL, and an entrepreneur with expertise in high technology and not-for-profit management, recently shared with us the story of his return to sport—as a coach of a nine-year old flag football team. Granted, having Kevin coach a team of nine-year old Tom-Bradys-to-be is loosely analogous to bringing E.B. White in to discuss grammar

and syntax with a class of fourth graders, but as with everything he tackles, Kevin faced this challenge with abundant enthusiasm and rigorous preparation. In fact, he was so prepared that he arrived at his first practice of the season with a thick playbook.

Kevin and his team of nine-year olds studied, practiced and ran the plays game-in and game-out. Sometimes they'd win; sometimes they'd lose. Almost always, though, they'd face teams that deployed a completely different strategy, one that holds universal appeal in the world of youth sports: get the ball to the best player, who is usually the biggest and fastest player, and let him run with it while everyone else stands around and watches. While this approach won Kevin's opponents quite a few games, it was one he refused to pursue with his own team. When questioned by parents and even other coaches why he was persisting with his detailed playbook, Kevin responded simply that the plays and the team's collective understanding of and adherence to them was his way of giving every athlete on his team—every one—the best chance at success.

When Kevin's team lines up for the opening snap of a game and every subsequent snap, each player on the field has an assignment, a job to perform, and thus a way to measure if he has been successful or not. Every player's job is different: some run a pass route to clear an area, others carry out fakes, and of course someone gets the ball; but each player has a role that is important to the success of the play. And each player has a chance at success on every, single play, regardless of whether or not the team manages to advance the ball up the field, and regardless of whether the player gets the ball. With this objective in mind, Kevin says that some of his most important coaching moments were to congratulate a player and remind him that what he did *away* from the ball helped make a touchdown possible.

Kevin stuck with his playbook even though his team suffered some early losses. But as the season progressed, the kids' enthusiasm for the game grew, even when they didn't win. They knew they were getting better and they were having fun doing it. This group of young athletes finished the season with their eyes on a bigger prize: not bragging rights over a win-loss record, but a deeper understanding of how to define, pursue and gauge success. Our guess is that Kevin's nine-year olds will mature into healthy, self-starting, independent ten-year olds and from there, who knows? The sky's the limit.

In the Arena has taken a page from Kevin's playbook, so to speak. Our vision is to place in the life's toolbox of every program participant a definition of what success means for them and a roadmap for how to travel that route. Armed with these skills and other lessons that are naturally imported from the sporting arena to the realm of youth development, Arena program participants stand the best chance at individual success and the greatest chance at maturing into healthy, happy, productive contributors to their present and future communities.

IMPLEMENTATION

Think of In the Arena as a market maker in a human capital market that connects donors, elite athletes and the American youth who are the Arena program participants and our organization's *raison d'être*. But far more than simply providing the infrastructure for these three groups to interrelate, In the Arena is bent on guaranteeing that the potential and skill set, and thus the value, of each participant is optimized.

- For American youth, this means providing them equal access to the highest-caliber role models, who encourage them to consider, explore and pursue the very best versions of themselves.
- For Arena Athletes, this means creating opportunities to deploy the full freight of their valuable skill sets as mentors and community leaders, a process that necessarily balances their focused athletic pursuits with a broader sense of purpose.
- For Arena contributors, this means allocating efficiently the capital that In the Arena stewards and putting it to work in a manner that effects the maximum change in the maximum number of people for the minimum cost.

In the Arena seeks to reduce capital market inefficiencies respecting youth development and elite athlete support by giving today's aspiring Olympians the resources needed to spend their non-training and -competition hours engaged in structured and relevant community service with American 18-and-unders. We pursue this aim by carefully assembling a roster of elite athletes and facilitating, managing and evaluating each athlete's community service

project. All Arena programs target specific work with community youth and undertake it just about anywhere today's 18-and-unders gather: in classrooms, in gymnasiums, on sports fields, in community and recreation centers, in church groups, in summer camps, you name it. Arena programs can be as short as three days or as long as a year, but whatever the duration, each program must deliver results where the inculcation of skills of self-inquiry, accountability, leadership and achievement in program participants is concerned.

In order to qualify for appointment to In the Arena's roster, Arena Athletes must undergo a rigorous application process that includes submitting an application that asks for personal, academic, athletic and civic background information; providing sport and non-sport references, undergraduate transcripts and recent tax forms; participating in a face-to-face interview; being fingerprinted and background checked in most states; and, of course, researching and designing a community service project that is in keeping with the highest and best aims of In the Arena. In addition to screening for athletic talent and financial need, In the Arena filters for those athletes who demonstrate an ability to act as first-rate role models in their communities.

HOMAGE

Did you know that Teddy Roosevelt once convened a meeting of college and university Presidents to discuss the rules of football? And that he was the first American President to leave the country while in office (he traveled to Central America to inspect the construction of the Panama Canal) and the first American to be awarded a Nobel Prize? And that in 1910, a year after vacating the White House (TR was the first to use that moniker, too), he traveled to Paris and stood on the steps of the Sorbonne and delivered a two-hour address to a largely French audience? And they listened! The speech, of course, was "Citizenship in a Republic," in which Roosevelt sounded a rousing call-to-arms for civic engagement and placed the responsibility for the betterment of society squarely on the shoulders of the individual. It is from that speech that the name of this organization, In the Arena, and many of its founding principles are drawn.

Roosevelt was an innovator, a writer and orator, a problem-solver, an athlete, a conservationist, a family man and above all, an engaged citizen. Given his adventurous, captivating and inquisitive manner, who better to serve as the progenitor of this organization's mission, vision and implementation? In the Arena, its staff, Board, athletes and supporters, aims to stay true to Roosevelt's vision of a constantly improving society in which character, courage and action are prized and in which each of us has an equal investment in the elevation of the whole.

If staying power is a barometer of truth and wisdom, then the following quote, as relevant today as it was a century ago, is axiomatic:

"It's not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually *in the arena*, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, and comes short again and again...who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."

If you want to learn more about our country's 26th President, we suggest starting with David McCullough's *Mornings on Horseback*, and proceeding directly to Edmund Morris' Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* and its sequel, *Theodore Rex*. If your TR thirst remains unslaked, the Library of America has published volumes of his letters and speeches, including of course, "Citizenship in a Republic."