

# Coach offers lessons in lacrosse and life

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Kevin Sherrington

When lacrosse teams from Highland Park or North Dallas or Plano or Coppell come down to Pennsylvania Avenue to play St. Phillips for the first time, Jack Tierney likes to study the faces of the visiting parents.

"Our field abuts a crackhouse," Tierney said. "It's an eye-opening experience."

He hopes that's the case, anyway. And not just for the visitors.

Tierney's goal, other than winning a few games here and there: Finding opportunities for kids without any.

Five years ago, he was 42, just retired from a career in investment banking, thinking about going for his Masters and wanting to get back into coaching, when Edie Lycke asked if he'd head up the lacrosse program at St. Phillips.

Lycke is the president and founder of a U.S. Lacrosse-sanctioned organization called BRIDGE – Building Relationships to Initiate Diversity, Growth and Enrichment. Wanting to start a lacrosse program in South Dallas, she settled on St. Phillips, a private school serving kindergarten through sixth grade.

Tierney was a logical choice. Having grown up on Long Island, a lacrosse hotbed, he played at Cornell and founded St. Mark's lacrosse team in 1991.

He also had the time and inclination.

"The nature of the sport is that it's perceived to be a spoiled rich white kid's sport," he said. "I wanted to help it grow in areas where it's not served."

His first team, in 2005, didn't win much. None of the players from that group will play in college.

But that isn't entirely the point, either. Two are at St. Mark's and another at ESD, all on scholarship.

He now fields four teams, two for boys and two for girls. Because of BRIDGE, he has access to funds and used equipment, but each year he raises funds for the \$75,000 to \$100,000 it takes to run four teams. Eventually he'd like to double that budget for travel to national tournaments.

All the kids have to put up is \$20 for membership in U.S. Lacrosse.

For their investment, they get exposure to a different sport and a coach who cares.

Or as Lycke described Tierney, "He cajoles, encourages, teases [in a positive way], bellows, jokes, prods, kids and anything else he needs to do to get the players to hear what he's saying and remember it.





"And what he's saying is not just about lacrosse but also about values, such as commitment, responsibility, respect and integrity."

Lycke used that statement in nominating Tierney for the Double-Goal Award from the Positive Coaching Alliance, a national organization that promotes winning and life lessons through sports.

In announcing Tierney as a recipient, PCA president Jim Thompson said the real winners are Tierney's players and society. Nice to know people still get that right.