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The Neighborhood Academy and Shady Side Academy Announce Cooperative Sponsorship in Girls' Volleyball

SSA Players Will Compete on TNA's Team, Which Will Join the WPIAL in 22-23

PITTSBURGH/FOX CHAPEL – The Neighborhood Academy (TNA) and Shady Side Academy (SSA) have announced a new PIAA-approved Cooperative Sponsorship of Girls Volleyball (co-op) agreement, set to begin in the 2022-2023 school year. The co-op will give students at SSA, which does not have an interscholastic girls' volleyball team, the opportunity to compete as members of TNA girls' volleyball team. Both schools' mascots are the Bulldogs.

The volleyball co-op was approved by the WPIAL Board of Directors on Dec. 20, 2021, and the PIAA Board of Directors on Jan. 26, 2022, and is the second co-op between the two Pittsburgh-area independent schools. In fall 2021, the schools began a football co-op enabling TNA players to play on SSA's team, which has been a highly positive experience for both schools and their players.

With the addition of players from SSA, the TNA girls' volleyball team will rejoin the Western Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic League (WPIAL) for the fall 2022 season and compete in Class 2A, Section 5, alongside Apollo-Ridge, Burrell, Deer Lakes, Derry, Freeport, Ligonier Valley and Valley. The team last competed in the WPIAL in 2016-2017, and has been competing in the Southwestern Pennsylvania Athletic Association (SWPAA) since 2018.

For Shady Side, the volleyball co-op increases the number of interscholastic sports it offers for girls to 15. Although SSA has never fielded an interscholastic volleyball team, there has been periodic interest in starting a team since the early 2000s. For the past few years, SSA has offered a coed club volleyball program that has fueled interest in the sport among students, especially girls.

Current TNA coach **Shante Wright** will remain with the team as an assistant coach, and TNA and SSA will work together to hire a head coach to lead the team as it rejoins the WPIAL. Practices and games will be held at the A.J. Palumbo Gymnasium at TNA's athletic facility in Stanton Heights.

We are excited to continue to build our relationship with Shady Side Academy," said TNA Director of Athletics **Gary Shawley**. "Football was a great success, and we wanted to reciprocate Shady Side Academy's hospitality by extending the invitation for their young women to play volleyball with us. We are looking forward not only to building a successful program between the two schools, but also to allowing our student-athletes to build lifetime friendships as well."

"We are excited to begin this cooperation between Shady Side Academy and The Neighborhood Academy in the sport of girls' volleyball," said SSA Director of Athletics **Sean Simmons**. "This opportunity will allow student-athletes from both schools to train and compete together, and it gives Shady Side the opportunity to expand its interscholastic sports offerings for girls. All of us at Shady Side are thrilled about this partnership and eager to meet the increased interest of our student body in WPIAL volleyball by partnering with the students and staff at TNA."

The volleyball and football co-ops are the result of a longstanding positive relationship between Shady Side Academy and The Neighborhood Academy, both of which are members of the Pittsburgh Consortium of Independent Schools (PCIS). SSA alumnus **Rev. Tom Johnson Jr. '73** co-founded TNA in 2001 after serving as a teacher, coach and board member at Shady Side for 10 years. As TNA's head of school from 2001-2018 and now as headmaster emeritus, Johnson remains active in both communities. Both schools have an athletic requirement for students as part of a balanced, college-preparatory curriculum focused on the whole child.

There are many cooperative sponsorships in the PIAA and WPIAL in nearly every sport. The program is designed to help smaller schools come together to provide opportunities for greater participation. Per PIAA by-laws, co-ops must involve at least one school with an enrollment of fewer than 300 boys or girls (depending on sport) in grades 9-11, a threshold both SSA and TNA meet. The schools must be in contiguous or overlapping school districts.

SSA and TNA have committed to the volleyball co-op for at least two seasons (fall 2022 and 2023), after which time the schools will evaluate the program and decide whether to continue it further.

About The Neighborhood Academy

The Neighborhood Academy is a faith-based, college preparatory, independent school in Pittsburgh for students in grades 6-12 who come from families who demonstrate financial need. The school's mission is to break the cycle of generational poverty by empowering youth and preparing them for college and citizenship. Learn more at www.theneighborhoodacademy.org.

About Shady Side Academy

Shady Side Academy is a nationally respected private school in Pittsburgh for boys and girls in grades PK-12, with an optional boarding experience in high school. Four age-specific campuses with extraordinary resources, teachers who actively mentor, a forward-thinking curriculum, a diverse and inclusive community, and a legacy of alumni accomplishments all inspire Shady Side students to high achievement in academics, the arts and athletics, and to meaningful ambitions in life. Learn more at www.shadysideacademy.org.

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