

Dear Mt. Diablo Unified School District Board of Education,

We, the Valley View Gymnasium Naming Committee, are writing this letter to propose that the gymnasium at Valley View Middle School be named after Cory Salmon, Physical Education Teacher and Coach. We would like this honor to be bestowed for Cory Salmon's lifetime. Over the past 36 years, Cory has been a dedicated teacher, mentor and coach who has helped to shape thousands of lives. Cory has left a lasting positive impression upon students, players, teachers and administrators, and truly deserves to be honored in this way.

Cory has worked in the district since 1983 and at Valley View since 1984. During these years Cory has been honored in the following ways:

- Valley View Teacher of the Year – student voted – 9 times
- Valley View Teacher of the Year – staff voted – 3 times
- Valley View Physical Education Department Chair
- 1984 – 2017 Pleasant Hill Wrestling Club
- 1985 – Present VVMS Social Dance/Square Dance Master Teacher
- 1985 – Founded the Middle School Wrestling League throughout Northern California
- 1990 – 2022 After School Volleyball program
- 2007 - NCS Honor Coach Wrestling
- 2012 - CIF State Wrestling Officials Golden Whistle
- 2014 - Lifechanger of the Year award
- 2014 - College Park Hall of Fame
- 2016 – 2020 VVMS Athletic Director for Middle School Sports
- 2016 – 2020 VVMS Coach, Football, Soccer, Volleyball Middle School Sports Program
- 2016 - MDEA Lifetime Achievement Award
- 2018 - CITCB Northern California Wrestling Officials Association
- 2019 - Pat Cadwallader Person of the Year Award
- 2019 – 2020 – Valley View Site Council Member
- 2020 - Volunteered during the Shelter in Place to hand out meals to the community at Valley View

Cory Salmon has positively impacted the lives of roughly over 8,000 students during his teaching years, and roughly an additional 2,000 through coaching. Cory never turned a student

away from his Wrestling programs, and at one time, had over a 100 students participating on the team.

Cory is always willing to volunteer for student activities; with setting up, chaperoning and cleaning up afterwards. When schools closed last March due to COVID , Cory was the first one to volunteer to help hand out meals at Valley View. Cory was there every day doing whatever was needed to support the community. It was amazing how many families he knew and that multiple generations were either his students or players.

Cory does a wonderful job of supporting our Special Education Students. He is always willing to modify the class for our SDC students and makes sure that they are all a full part of the class. He personally takes time work with our SDC students individually, and helps them grow and builds their confidence. Cory gets to know his students personally and makes them all feel safe in his classes.

The Cory Salmon Gymnasium plaque would be paid by donations and would not impact the school's budget. We have two options for the plaque. The first option has an approximate cost of \$850. The plaque's dimensions would be 22" X 10", bronze with raised letters. The second option would be a student created mural that would have dimensions of 36" X 12" painted on wood. The cost of the wood/student created mural would be \$50. The plaque would be positioned above the PE Office facing the blacktop.

We appreciate the MDUSD Board of Education taking the time to read our proposal and the attached letters and emails. We truly believe that Cory Salmon is deserving of this honor and hope you agree also.

Accompanying this proposal are letters, emails and testaments from former students, players, co-workers and parents ranging from the 1980's to today in support of naming the Valley View gymnasium the ***Cory Salmon Gymnasium***.

Committee Members:

Dorothy Weisenberger, Parent
James Keck, Teacher/Coach
Ryan Ruff, Student/Player/Teacher
Joe Battle, Player/Student
Edward Criado, Student/Player/Teacher
Lisa M. Sullivan, Principal

December 25, 2020

To Whom it May Concern,

I have known Cory Salmon since 1985 when I was a freshman in high school. He was teaching Physical Education and coaching wrestling at the time. I signed up for wrestling, a sport I knew absolutely nothing about, because a sophomore friend of mine talked me into joining. Deke Black was an amputee below the knee and wrestling was a sport he could excel. I was the kid who had been cut from the 7th grade "B" basketball team in Peoria, Illinois. We were joined by an eclectic group of kids, band members, drama kids, Saturday School regulars and honor students. Coach Salmon had a way of making each one of us, regardless of our ability, feel like we could be successful wrestlers. He made us feel like we were important and a part of a team or family. My senior year the team won College Park's first League Championship for Coach Salmon. For me, Coach Salmon had guided the kid who got cut from the 7th grade "B" team to a NCS Championships and 3rd place finish at the State Championships.

I wrestled in college at both Chico State and UC Davis. I would return home on winter break and work out with the College Park team. When I would get back to college I would always have my best practices and matches, beating guys I usually struggled to compete with. I realize now that this was a byproduct of the confidence that Coach Salmon would instill in everyone. His practices were physically and mentally and demanding (tougher than the ones in college). Coach Salmon could make anyone believe in themselves, get you to push through barriers, and feel a part of the family.

When I finished college and was working in a lab, I stopped by Valley View to visit Cory. He was on the grass field eating an apple, blowing his whistle and calling out numbers. His students were running around laughing playing soccer. He called them all by name, encouraging them to push hard, to **compete** and have fun. The same way he was able to get buy in from his wrestlers in high school he got buy in from his students at Valley View. He asked if I wanted to help coach the wrestling team. I had never thought about it **before** but he felt I would do a good job.

About a year later Cory called me and said there might be a teaching job at Valley View that fit my skills. Teaching was not in my wheelhouse with public speaking being one of my **biggest** fears. Again Cory talked me into coming down to the school to talk to the principal. He said he would help me figure it out and that it was no different from coaching. Within a week I was teaching biology, art and PE. I spent the next four years teaching at Valley View with Cory before crossing the street to College Park. I got to observe him interact with his students on a daily basis.

What Cory did for me I saw him do for his students and athletes over and over again. He **makes** each student feel important. Cory takes the time to learn all of his students names even after 30 years of teaching. He inspires all of the kids to work hard and try their best. He has a knack for understanding which kids might be struggling socially or emotionally and helping them build confidence and feel **important**. He will ask kids about their other classes and families. He finds ways to encourage his students to try new things. During his square dancing unit he gets kids to interact with other students they would not normally socialize with. He teaches valuable life lessons about treating everyone with respect along with *dosido* and *aleman left*.

A consummate professional, Cory takes his job as a Physical Educator seriously. He is one of the first people on campus and one of the last to leave every day. He has been in the mini-gym since it was built. The scoreboards, pullup bars, record boards and so much more were added with input from Cory. The storage room, locker rooms and gym all have inspirational sayings posted by Coach Salmon. He has been organizing after school activities in the Valley View gym for over two decades. For years he has encouraged students to take part in after school wrestling, volleyball, basketball, track and more. Many of these kids, like me, may not have even seen themselves as athletes before Cory gave them the confidence to try out.

Cory makes sure to come to College Park games to see former students compete. You can find him at wrestling meets, football games, softball, track, girls and boys soccer and volleyball games. If one of his former students is competing he makes sure to make it to at least one of their games. When he walks on campus at College Park his former students will run up to greet him, "Hey Coach Salmon". They are always excited to see him and he will take the time to tell them something positive he saw them doing in the game. He will also undoubtedly ask about school and their family.

Coach Salmon has been a huge influence in my life. His ability to get folks to believe in themselves is uncanny. He treats all kids with respect and expects the same from them. My experience with Coach Salmon is in no way unique. It's been 25 years since Cory convinced me I could teach and coach. Along the way I have seen him get countless kids to push their boundaries, overcome their insecurities and feel like they were a part of something bigger. Why do I teach and coach? Because Coach Salmon did it for me and it made a difference in my life. I can think of no better way to honor his legacy at Valley View than to name the gym where he made a difference in so many lives after him.

Sincerely'

Jim Keck
Athletic Director
College Park High School

Coach Salmon

When I was asked to be part of the committee to rename the Valley View Gymnasium after Coach Salmon. I was a little touched, proud and worried. There are so many things I want to write about, but my only fear is once I submit this personal statement there was going to be something I forgot to add.

I met Coach in 1983, I was sixteen and he was twenty-three and fresh out of college with his teaching certificate. I still think I looked older than him. He was replacing a well admired coach (Clyde Forrest) who had suffered a major heart attack. Coach Forrest told the wrestlers that he had actively recruited Coach Salmon for the position and that he would be a good fit. I have to say that he was more than a good fit for the program, he was incredible. His level of coaching only takes a back seat to his person. He had a way with the students and athletes. His actions spoke louder than his words.

I didn't know it at the time but I was an at-risk student. I grew up around a lot of disfunction and chaos. I barely graduated from high school. Once Coach Salmon found out that I had enrolled into DVC and was wrestling, he tracked me down and went over my class schedule. I was taking seven classes (21 units). I had unfortunately set myself up for failure. He helped me adjust my schedule to twelve units and walked me over to the counseling office and had me schedule an appointment. This all-sounds kind of trivial, but at the time I was eighteen and working part-time, living in a friend's garage. I was contemplating leaving DVC and working fulltime as a mover for UC Global. If Coach Salmon did not track me down and inadvertently mentor me, I don't know where I would be today. That first semester was the most important one for me. It showed with hard work and dedication I could earn a college degree. I ended graduating from college with a Bachelor of Arts degree and retiring from a twenty-five-year career with the Contra Costa County Probation Department as a Probation Officer.

Once I graduated from college, I would come by and occasionally watch the wrestling meets. As all his previous students, he would remember your name and greet you with a big smile. I did notice that he had become more of a pillar of the community. He had started the Pleasant Hill Wrestling Club and the Valley View Wrestling club (my nephew wrestled for the VVWC). His selfless time he spent with these clubs is amazing. I know personally that he worked and mentored many at risk youths in these programs (through my work). He told me on more than one occasion I have this student coming to practice to keep them out of trouble. While these students were in his program they would perform better in school. He was constantly fund raising for these programs. I was sitting with him one time and a former student had playfully called him, "Willy Wonka." I asked him about this and he stated that he sold candy to help fund the wrestling programs.

I could literally go on and on about Coach Salmon, and there would still be something I left out. I just really admire this man and his character. He has done so much for the community. The countless hours he has volunteered just for the wrestling community is amazing. He always was quick to lend an ear to anyone if you had a question.

I hope this helps portray the man he is and has been to me. I think it would be a great honor to rename the Valley View Gymnasium after Coach Salmon. He has been a rock in the community since I first met him in 1983. In my opinion he is a man to be admired.

Joe Battle

To whom it may concern,

I was one of the lucky ones. I had Coach Cory Salmon as a wrestling coach in junior high, as well as all of the years I wrestled in high school at College Park. It was not like many things in life in that you only realize how good you had it much later. We all knew what we had in coach Salmon. The results he produced were undeniable and even for kids it was something we could appreciate. We would walk into dual matches and walk into tournaments and expect to win. We knew we had been prepared adequately because coach Salmon was our coach. Everywhere we went we were respected as a team and coach Salmon was immensely respected by our rival coaches and wrestlers alike.

Our hard work was recognized and visible in our competitions but the real work and preparation to become champions happened in practice. I played division 1 football in college, graduated from the California State Corrections academy, the Police Academy, The FBI National academy, I have been on several SWAT teams and I can tell you that the most difficult thing I have ever done in my life was go through wrestling practice at College Park High School.

It was not just wrestling techniques that were being dispensed in that wrestling room. There are life lessons that I learned from Coach Salmon that I carry with me to this day. Things like giving your all to the things in life that matter the most to you. Things like fighting through adversity and trusting in yourself that you will find a way to win. Things like putting in the hard work that it takes to prepare to be successful. I remember that one of our teammates missed weight a couple of times and didn't want to do the hard work it would take to cut weight so he quit the team. I remember seeing Coach Salmon's reaction and being surprised about how much it affected him and hurt him. The following day at practice Coach Salmon addressed the team and told us why it hurt him so much. He said that quitting becomes a habit, and that once you start to quit it gets easier to quit other things. So today you might be quitting wrestling but tomorrow you could be quitting school or your job or quitting on your family. And those things are unacceptable. I think about that speech all the time. I heard that speech when I was 15 years old. I'm 45 now. I think about it all the time.

I said earlier that we knew what we had in Coach Salmon at the time he was coaching us and that was true. What I didn't know is how much it would mean to me for the rest of my life to have been coached and mentored by a champion like Coach Salmon. No matter where I go or what I do in life, if I meet someone who was wrestled for Cory Salmon they are my brother.

Sincerely,
Morgan Chappell

December 11, 2020

Valley View Middle School
Committee to Name the Gymnasium

My daughter, Kayla Davis, attended Valley View Middle School. Kayla has special needs and while attending Valley View, she was in a full time support SDC class. She had many challenges due to her cognitive delays and sensory issues. For one year Cory Salmon was her PE teacher. I had heard so many wonderful stories about Cory and I was excited that he would be working with Kayla. Even though it took extra time and a lot of patience, Cory always tried to find ways for Kayla to participate and be included with the other general ed. students in her class.

One semester the students had square dancing for PE. In the beginning Kayla was uncomfortable in participating so she sat in the back of the room with her para and just watched the other students practice. Then one day, Cory asked one of the male students to ask Kayla to square dance with him and Kayla jumped up ready to dance. Since the male partner leads, Kayla was able to follow his lead and participate with the group.

As a parent of a child with special needs, it is difficult to explain how much this meant to Kayla. Kayla's para had taken a video of Kayla dancing so I put it on Kayla's tablet and she would watch it over and over again. Kayla is now 20 years old and she still watches the video of her dancing while explaining to us on how much fun she was having.

Most people don't understand how one experience in life can affect another person's life so dramatically. Cory understood this and he did so much for his students to not only participate but to feel included. I would definitely like to see the gymnasium named after Cory so people will remember him and the type of person he was to all of our kids, in and out of the PE environment.

Sincerely,

Lorrie Davis
Parent to Kayla Davis
925-285-1449

1-11-2021

To whom it may concern-

Coach Salmon has influenced me and my fitness carrier greatly. Through the Pleasant Hill Wrestling Programs along with other various sports the Valley View Athletics, he exposed me to the importance of skill development.

As a kid, I used to think, "How is this old man able to toss me around and take me down with ease?" (lol). Well, he was faster through better balance, coordination, accuracy, and the ability to be relaxed and flexible with the ability to go with the flow. These skills have inspired me to continue training them. So over the last 20 years, I have been able to expand on the skills and improve my own athletic abilities, and to compete on the world stage, the CrossFit Games.

Not only has he impacted my athletic carrier, but Cory has also impacted my professional carrier. I have been fortunate to teach these Neurological skills for the last 15 years. So, in some ways, not only has he impacted my life, his lessons have influenced the thousands of people I have worked with over the years to become better athletes, or just live a healthy and fit life.

To Coach Salmon, thank you for being you, and I hope you enjoy this next chapter. I'm grateful to have you as a teacher.

-Jamie Lee

Hi Teddy,

Thank you for reaching out Facebook and giving CP Class of '95 an opportunity to be a part of honoring such an amazing man.

Mr. Salmon was my PE teacher in 1990 but mostly knew me through my older brothers who also had him in the late 80's. As soon as he saw me in his role sheet, my name was no longer Merisa but "Boyd". Every time I would see him in the hall, "Hey Boyd! How is the family?" My mom used to work at the 711 near the school DVC during that time and Coach Salmon knew her on a personal basis and would call her "Mom". Looking back he had a way making everyone feel seen and important.

In 2015 my youngest daughter started at Valley View and nice to see his familiar face during her 6th grade registration, but it was much to my surprise after not seeing me for over at least 20 years, that I hear through the crowd ..."Hey Boyd!! How's the family?" It brought such a warm smile to my face and still does as I write this. From that day on my daughter Noelani was also known as "Boyd".

Coach Salmon has poured his time, his discipline, his integrity and heart into generations of kids at Valley View. There is no person I could see more worthy of getting this honor than him.

Merisa "Boyd" Martinez

1/8/2021

To Whom it May Concern;

Coach Salmon was always a great mentor, who had your back through it all. Coaching, competition, college decisions, local jobs and references, you name it.

But what I'll always miss most is the great guy he is. Always a delight to be around, constantly puts others first and makes anybody wanting to be a part of our club teams feel welcomed.

From my Jaguar days in P.E., to my days as a Falcons, I couldn't have succeeded without the great help he's been to me personally in my growth and as person. Thank You

Gerson Nkunku

CPHS Class of 2008

VVMS Class of 2004

Gymnasium Honoring Mr. Corey Salmon
January 12th, 2021

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Tareena Oakley, and I am a former Valley View Student-Athlete 2001-2003 (no need to count how long ago that was 😊). During my tenure at Valley View, not only did I have the pleasure of being one of Mr. Salmon's students, but I was also lucky enough to wrestle and be his teacher's assistant.

Without a doubt, the Valley View Gymnasium should be renamed to honor Coach Corey Salmon. Not to discredit the other wonderful teachers at the school – But no one compares or comes close to Mr. Salmon. I can whole heartily say, he made an impact on **ALL** of the students. Even kids that didn't have him as a Teacher or Coach would still want to be his TA. That right there says he was able to leave a positive impact on everyone. His light, positivity, dedication, and passion were clearly seen whether you had his class or not.

When I think back to my time at Valley View, I will always remember one specific day. I was in sixth grade and luckily had Mr. Salmon as my Physical Education teacher. One day, he said to me "Have you ever thought about wrestling..." I smiled and said, "No Way!" A little back story, my Dad use to wrestle with Mr. Salmon in College (talk about a long time ago...) and I have two older sisters that both had Mr. Salmon as teachers. So, he knew my background and knew I grew up playing many different sports. When I went home that day, I told my Mom, "I want to try wrestling." Disclaimer, girls in wrestling wasn't super popular, yet. My Mom said, "Ok, let's give it a week and see how it goes."

I can say it was the best decision I ever made. I ended up wrestling my entire middle school career and did a short stint in High School. The way Mr. Salmon teaches/coaches is unlike any other. He is dedicated to the craft of learning, growing, and pushing you to new limits without burning you out. I was immediately hooked. I've had more Coaches than I can count during my athletic career, and Coach Salmon always stood out and raised the bar. He has a way with making hard work fun, and teaching in different forms that you didn't even know you were learning. It's difficult to describe. He's one of a kind!

To this day, I haven't met a more grounded and thoughtful person. His legacy at Valley View should always be remembered for those to come and those who've attended. I would love to one day have my kids and/or nieces and nephews attend Valley View Middle School and be able to share my stories about who the gym is named after. Coach Corey Salmon is a perfect name for the Gymnasium.

Sincerely,



Tareena Oakley
2001 – 2003 Valley View Student-Athlete

4 December 2020

Principal Sullivan,

I met Cory at Diablo Valley College, he then was the number one wrestler in my weight class and I soon found out he was also one of the best in the State of California. As I begin to know him better I also knew I had a life long friend. Cory went into Teaching and Coaching as I started my career as a Firefighter in Contra Costa County. In the mid 80's he started a wrestling club that has now produced local, State and National Champions along with many very successful alumni from his mentorship. He had asked me to drop in and help with coaching which gave me a chance to assist in the soon to be, top club in the greater bay area. I spent many years helping Coach Cory. Having all three of my daughters go through his physical education and the two younger ones enter his wrestling program I can personally attest to what he gave my family.

Cory Teaches with his heart, he has skill, talent, the ability to connect with students, patience and with one of his greatest attributes, his ability to give his students direction establishing goals both in and out of the gym. He has given these students a good strong base for the life they are beginning. I have watched Coach Cory go out of his way and sacrifice countless hours to teach, train, develop and be there for not just for some but all of his students.

Coach Cory was a large part of all of my Daughters lives, mostly my youngest who actively wrestled for his team in middle school. I was assisting Coach Cory at that time by helping out as much as I could on my off days from the firehouse. I truly admired his coaching abilities and the way he interacted with the students along with his ability to connect. I was able to take some of his coaching attributes to the Fire service and use them to teach and mentor throughout my career of 34 years.

In the dedication of his home gym, I am honored to hopefully influence this decision. I have now known Coach Cory for 40 years and have admired what he has done for the wrestling community and most of all for our community. He has been the cornerstone of development with many, that still as young men, will give him credit to their success. In the fire service a dedication, a plaque or remembrance service occurs in passing. Honoring Coach Cory for, by know, the countless hours in the school gym will be a statement of what he has done for our community's youth. The recognition of this honor by the school and the district states what all of his students and their parents already know, that Coach Cory will always be an inspiration, long after he has the enjoyment of retiring. I can only hope that there is a Coach Cory for my 4 grandsons and any others that may come along. A Person such as Coach Cory that will influence hard work, dedication, honor, pride along with being a mentor that has molded another who may someday have the same dedication. I can name many from his program that have been influenced, I have three of them myself and including me.

I appreciate the time you have taken to consider this honor, I would be nothing less than proud to drive by the school and see my friend honored.

Respectfully,

Tom Oakley
Battalion Chief Ret. CCCFD

January 8, 2021

Ms. Lisa Sullivan, Principal
Valley View Middle School
181 Viking Drive
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

Dear Principal Sullivan,

I would like to write to you about a teacher at Valley View Middle School that has changed my life. That teacher is Coach Salmon. I graduated from Valley View June 1995. Coach Salmon was my P.E. teacher and I also was a TA for him as well. This year I heard will be his last year, retiring after all these years of dedicated service. When I started Valley View we all dressed out for P.E. in the small room next to the bathrooms. It was so cool when they built the gym and we had dressing rooms. Coach Salmon took such pride in that space as the students had a place to dress and the teachers had offices and a dedicated gym. Coach Salmon is the teacher from Middle School that was my favorite. From when his girls were born, to having fun as his TA, to field day and everything in between. He always had kind words and that famous smile.

Even as an adult he will always be Coach Salmon to me. Everytime I see him, he asks how I am doing and also my kids. With my oldest son now in college and my other son a Junior at CP. I don't think I have heard anyone say anything bad about him. He has always been about the students. I wish him well on his retirement. I know he won't be sitting down much as he has that spark that won't stop.

If there is anyone that deserved the honor of naming the gym after it would be Coach Salmon. I will be there with my pom poms and the biggest sign to congratulate and share in the celebration.

Sincerely

Ajsha Pullin
Formerly Ajsha Hammond Valley View Class of 1995

Melissa Ridings
Physical Education College Park High School

January 8, 2021

To whom it may concern,

I'm writing on behalf of Cory Salmon; Teacher, Coach and Mentor. He has had generations of students, all who have nothing but great things to say and positive memories of him as their teacher. Even if students were not particularly engaged students at school, they always loved his class. I teach freshmen PE at College Park and if any of my students had Mr. Salmon, I always felt like I had a high bar to reach with those students. Hard to fill his shoes, that is for certain.

I think it makes perfect sense to name the gym at Valley View after this great teacher, coach and mentor! Cory Salmon, in my opinion, is synonymous with Valley View. He is Valley View and will always be remembered by all the students who have gone through Valley View. I honestly don't even understand why this is up for discussion! The gym named after anyone else would just not make any sense at all.

But, since it is up for discussion, please consider naming the gym in his honor as it is a well deserved. He is definitely leaving behind a legacy. Thank you!

Respectfully submitted,
Melissa Ridings

January 8, 2021

To whom it may concern:

Tony Rolandelli I had transferred to Valley View middle school in 1998 where I attended 7th grade. Cory Salmon was assigned as my Physical Education Teacher. It was one of my only classes I remember being excited to attend. He not only gave us fun activities, but also made sure we worked hard. Cory didn't just take interest into what he was teaching, but also took interest into every student he had. This is really rare to find at least in my school experience. It was Cory's class that introduced me to wrestling which opened my eyes to bigger things. After school I'd then attend his wrestling practices which also took place in the Valley View gym. Cory worked to teach children all day and then after school he continued to teach children all night.

If it wasn't for Cory and all he taught me in some of the most complicated years and times in my life. I literally don't know where I'd be, because wrestling formed me into the man I am today. When I look back on my time at Valley View the only image I have is that Gym and the man that was always there teaching 12 hour a days. Cory Salmon is a true legend to that school, to the sport of wrestling and to the city of Pleasant Hill itself.

Tony Rolandelli
Valley View Class of 1999

Article from the Contra Costa Times – LifeChanger Award 2014

PLEASANT HILL — Adam Buscemi was admittedly on the wrong path. His grades were near failing. He was **suspended** a few times for fighting, lacked focus and a peer influence was taking him in a wrong direction.

Then, the sixth-grader at Valley View Middle School met Coach Cory Salmon, who encouraged the young Martinez resident to sign up for the wrestling club, and Adam's life soon changed for the better.

"He sees kids with no direction and takes them under his wing," says Adam's mom, Claudia **Buscemi**.

Adam, now in eighth grade, credits his coach for his improved focus, athleticism, grade-point average, and being college-bound.

Adam opted to nominate Salmon for a national LifeChanger award. Salmon is among 400 school district employees across the country who have made a positive impact on students' lives. He is among 12 nominated in the greater Bay Area and the only one in **Contra** Costa County.

Salmon, who founded the **Pleasant** Hill Wrestling Club, has coached for 31 years, and is a longtime physical education teacher in the Mt. Diablo Unified School District.

The nomination could have come from almost any number of youth whose lives might have turned out quite different.

Salmon's influence and the gymnasium, where at-risk, young athletes come to learn the sport, have long-**provided constancy** in the midst of daily dysfunctions. Salmon cites such **instances** of their **grappling** with **homelessness**, moving around a lot with Section 8 housing, a father's incarceration, or **another parent's** addiction.

"There are issues with defiance, anger management. This sport seems to help them release that energy," he says.

Nobody is turned away. Instead, Salmon **provides** a place where they feel a sense of belonging and meet a coach who cares.

On a recent **afternoon**, two dozen youth practice their moves and several takedowns; a **handful** are clad in standard-issue Valley View **physical** education attire.

Always **encouraging**, Salmon calls out "sit out, turn in, sit in, turn out," demonstrating a simple hip heist, and moving from duo to duo, coaching **positively** as he goes. A quick whistle, he calls "time, switch" and reminds the students to shake hands.

Seventh-grade triplet boys are part of Salmon's club, and they credit their coach for his **patience** and "treating everybody the same, no matter how good you are," says Eric Karas, 13.

Twin, **seventh**-grade girls Ysa and Lexi Sittser-Ketron concur.

The wrestling club is where Salmon has devoted thousands of volunteer hours, going way beyond teaching the many scenarios students may encounter in a tournament, as well as those they may face in life.

The young wrestlers are well-versed in wrestling terminology — bow and arrow, “hip and roll” and inside cradle — which are punctuated with lessons about ingredients for success, be it treating others with respect or fostering self-confidence.

“I hold kids accountable for getting in shape, working hard and learning the moves,” Salmon says.

“Success is based solely on your willingness to commit and make a sacrifice.”

Salmon gets kids to redeem recyclables to help offset entry fees for weekly tournaments, picking up the tab for those who can’t afford to participate.

Along the way, there have been the club’s baseball games and countless rides home.

Trips to a summer tournament in Idaho include stops at Yellowstone, laser tag and bowling.

“The main thing is I’m there for them,” Salmon says. “It’s about camaraderie, about connecting. It’s more than just wrestling.”

Jim Keck, a state champion who wrestled for Salmon and now teaches physical education at College Park High School, is assisting his mentor during practice.

Keck notes how participation in athletics correlates with better academic performance, and cites that among the 43 percent of graduating students who went on to a four-year college in 2012, some 62 percent played a sport.

“(Coach Salmon) ... is not just going through the motions. He honestly cares,” Keck adds.

Pleasant Hill resident Casey Strand is a former world medalist, and also assists Salmon at practice, crediting his former coach for leading by example.

“He makes you want to be a better person,” Strand says.

“When he’s coaching, everybody’s listening.”

Very nice honor for a great guy who coached both my sons in wrestling at College Park. Jim Keck and Casey Strand were classmates and teammates of my son. Corey stays close to many of his former wrestlers long after they graduated. When my son Pittsburg Police Officer Larry Lasater was shot and killed in the line of duty, Corey came to the John Muir ICU for a final goodbye to his former wrestler and friend. Well deserved nominee. ... Ms. Lasater

Messages of Support to name the Valley View Gymnasium after Cory Salmon

Congratulations to Cory Salmon on a very long and successful career! Your absence around campus and in the classroom will be greatly missed. The impact you had on so many lives spanned several generations, whether it was through school in your P.E. class, the wrestling room, volleyball or any of the other sports programs you left your mark on, your absence will be felt by everyone. Your dedication to hard work, the class you show, the values you've instilled in your students and the effort you put in with everything you did throughout your career is evident to everyone that meets you. You were never too busy for any of your students when they would come to you and you always offered your undivided attention.

I know from personal experience had it not been for Coach Salmon hounding me every day in P.E. class to join the wrestling team, I may have never found something I was good at and truly loved doing. Wrestling for me became more than just a sport, it taught me that you get out of something what you put into it, the meaning of being a part of a team and how the choices you make affect not just yourself but the people around you. Wrestling helped me learn how to work hard, mature as a young man and left me with many lifelong relationships from my teammates up to my coaches that I am grateful for to this very day.

--Justin Conley, student

I met Coach Cory when I was going to Valley View in the Winter of 1985. He was nice enough to let me come practice with the College Park Wrestling team and made me feel like one of the team members. He would also help out with our freestyle wrestling club at Little C Athletic Club in his spare time. Cory then went on to organize The Pleasant Hill Wrestling Club and mentored many, many kids including myself through that club as well as College Park wrestling. He was not only giving of his time and knowledge but was helpful outside of wrestling. I consider Coach Cory to be one of the most outstanding and influential people in my youth.

Thank you for your consideration in the naming of the Valley View Gym after Cory.

Have a good day,

Andy Beers