



**FALL
2024**

35 YEARS STRONG

Players of all ages put the Arizona Region on the map of volleyball excellence across the globe.

FROM THE "COMMISH"

New changes allow for clearer roles between board members and staff.



AZ REGION COVERING THE COURT NEWSLETTER

AZHP 2024

HIGHLIGHTS OF AZ REGION
HIGH PERFORMANCE 2024

➔ AZHP GIRLS U17



➔ AZHP BOYS U19



➔ AZ REGION ALL-STARS



ON THE COVER



By Ron Pelham | AZ Region High Performance Director

The Arizona Region of USA Volleyball set up another outstanding showing at the USA All-Star Volleyball Championships in Des Moines, Iowa this July.

Each year in May, the AZ Region hosts three High Performance clinics - we call "AZHP" - which also serve as tryouts for the upcoming All-Star Championships. The clinics are conducted by some of the top volleyball coaches in our state. It's a phenomenal opportunity for junior boys and girls to learn from the best of the best.

Coaches not only look for highly talented athletes to join our High Performance program to compete at All-Stars, but also select players with positive attitudes and responsible work ethic.

To be chosen is an honor and rewarded with high-level coaching throughout the summer - culminating with the highest level of competition against the best national and international volleyball teams.

“

The Arizona High Performance program returned from Des Moines, Iowa with impressive achievements at the 2024 USA All-Star Championships. Our six teams demonstrated exceptional skill and teamwork, securing gold in the Boys U19 division and bronze in the Girls U17 division.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our outstanding coaching staff, dedicated chaperones, efficient administrative team, supportive parents, and most importantly, our talented athletes. Your tireless efforts and commitment to excellence have made this success possible.

-Ron Pelham | Arizona Region High Performance Director

”

➔ AZHP 2025

- Tryout/Clinic: May 16th–18th
- Training Week: July 14th–20th
- Travel Dates: July 22nd–28th
- USA All-Star Championships:
July 24–27, 2025 in Madison, WI



Be sure to check out the brilliant photography of our 2024 #AZHP delegation by the talented photographer Slate Mitchell on our Instagram, @azregionusavolleyball.

BOOKMARK AZHP 2025

www.azregionvolleyball.org/highperformance



FROM THE “COMMISH”

By Harold Cranswick
AZ Region of USA Volleyball Commissioner

Prior to 1989, members of USA Volleyball who lived in Arizona were considered part of the Sun Country Region. In that same year, the Arizona Region applied for and was granted status as an independent Region of USA Volleyball; separate from the Sun Country Region. No longer did teams have to travel to California, Texas or New Mexico to participate in a region-sanctioned tournament. The Cactus Region was born.

Upon its acceptance as an independent USAV Region, the Arizona Region created its own Board of Directors and governing documents. With a membership of less than 3000 in 1998, the Board of Directors consisted of five representatives who dealt with policy issues and had responsibility over many operational aspects of the Region. Shortly after becoming a Region, Becky Hudson was hired to deal with many of the operational issues that could be handled in the Arizona Region Office. From 1998 to 2024, the Region membership flourished to over 13,000 forcing the Region staff expansion to a modest four. The workload has still grown much faster than the staff size while the duties and responsibilities of the Board members have remained the same.

What used to be a small, reasonable list of duties of each Board member during the junior girls' season to help the Region run has exploded into a lengthy list of responsibilities throughout the entire year. While growth is something that the Region embraces and enjoys, that same growth makes it unreasonable and unfair to demand that a Board member with a full time job (and a family) be expected to find the time to respond to a large number of e-mails, communicate with members of their Division, write newsletter articles about their Division, generate budgets and calendars and confer with other members of their Division before making decisions or authorizing work. In some cases, these board members also work as club directors, coaches or officials as well.

This increasingly heavy workload has generated some frustration for everyone - Board members, staff and members alike. Unfortunately, some work has taken longer than necessary, some inquiries have been delayed or even gone unanswered and what used to be regular communication with members of Divisions has become less regular with some deadlines being missed. None of these examples occurred because of a lack of desire, interest or concern for the Region - they have been due to the increasing demands on everyone's limited time.

After speaking with many members of the Region, it was decided, as a Board, that the time had come for the Region to move away from what has been called a “Working Board” (the

Region's old model where Board members had policy and operational duties) to a “Policy Board” (more like corporations where Board members are only concerned with policy issues and leave all of the operational aspects of the Region to the staff). This major decision frees the Board members to focus on policy and planning for the Region and lets the staff deal with the operational tasks that need to be addressed.

For many, if not most, members of the Region, the change to a Policy Board will go unnoticed. Board positions will remain the same and elections will take place to fill those Board positions. Current Board members will continue in their roles and will now be able to focus on “bigger” issues like planning and budgeting for the Region instead of serving on the front line responding to phone calls, e-mails and text messages. The Board will continue to meet, as usual, but the conversations will transition more to policy issues and much less talk concerning operational topics.

From now on, members of the Region will be encouraged to begin any inquiries by contacting the Region Office first. From there, one of the staff should be able to respond very quickly. If the staff member doesn't know the answer immediately, they will know where to get the answer and provide the answer in a timely manner. Some current staff will have expanded roles (compared to the past) but this has been discussed with them and they are very willing to take care of the operational tasks assigned by the Board. All of this means that Board members will no longer have the additional pressure to complete operational tasks being they are already short on time.



This change is designed to benefit current and potential members of the Arizona Region as well as parents of junior members. It involves more changes than most members will notice but it will take a little time. This is a significant change and the Board will move in a slow and deliberate fashion over the course of this season as operational duties are moved from Board members and reassigned to staff. Most of this will go on behind the scenes but the Board feels it is important to inform our members about a change that is being made for their benefit. We hope members and parents of juniors will appreciate the effort being made to improve customer service at the Region.

See you on the court,
Harold W. Cranswick
Commissioner | Arizona Region of USA Volleyball



35 YEARS STRONG

We are so grateful for the staff who dedicate their time and talents to delivering quality volleyball programs for players of all ages. Thank you!

BOARD RETREAT 2024

The governing board met in July to prepare for the upcoming season.



Pictured Front Row - Becky Hudson - Office Manager and Interim Treasurer, Stefany Pew - Board Secretary and Officials Division Liaison in the office, JR Salima - Ethics and Compliance Officer, Cindy Kirk - Jr Division Coordinator and SafeSport Director

Back Row - Shawn Covely - he is the club director for Ignite Volleyball Club, Eric Hodgson - Outreach Director, Ron Pelham - Adult Division Coordinator and High Performance Director, Harold Cranswick - Commissioner.

—THE BIRTH OF THE ARIZONA REGION OF USA VOLLEYBALL—

The Arizona Region of USA Volleyball, "AZ Region", formerly known as the Cactus Region, was born out of two ideas: the chance to limit the travel of clubs to the Arizona area instead of tournaments ending late Sundays in west Texas, California and New Mexico.

And the second... *spite!*

This is the recollection of the original Arizona Region Commissioner Mary (Callentine) Carlton. In a video interview on our website, Mary Carlton and current AZ Region Commissioner Harold Cranswick document the beginnings and the growth of our Region.

The two discuss the need for a Region of USA Volleyball in Arizona, who assisted Mary in this game changing undertaking, and how she was treated, initially, at the USA Volleyball meetings - when discussing the addition of the Arizona or as it was then known, the Cactus Region.

Mary Carlton shares rich history and names some of you may remember.

Thirty-five years ago this fall the Region began operation with just a handful of clubs and teams. She was integral in both inception and execution of what now is a USA Volleyball Region of well over 13,000 members.

Enjoy [this interview](#) with both commissioners and the people and stories leading us here 35 years later. And Happy Birthday, Arizona Region!



WELCOME TO THE BOARD: STEFANY PEW



The Arizona Region of USA Volleyball is happy to announce Stefany Pew has been appointed as Secretary of the Board of Directors. Pew will be working on our staff as the Official's Liaison.

Arrowhead and bring Club Arrowhead East out to the Queen Creek, East Mesa area. In 2005 I had my first baby and decided to take a year off from coaching. It was during this time that I discovered my love for officiating! I loved the flexibility I could have with choosing my schedule and working when it was convenient for my little family. I loved keeping myself around the game and staying involved any way that I could."

"From then on, I continued coaching Club, officiating, coaching High School, and eventually ran my own club. After my club dissolved in 2023, I decided to take a year off and enjoy the break. However, that didn't last long! I was contacted by the Region about becoming a member of the Arizona Region Board as the Secretary. I had been a member of the Officials board years prior and loved my short time with that, so I figured this would be a good fit for me as well. Not long after becoming a member of the board, I was offered a position in the Region office as a staff member to help with the officials. This position became something that I didn't know I always wanted to do. Being a part of the Region in almost every way possible has prepared me for this position and I'm so excited to continue to learn and help the Region grow!"

The AZ Region graciously welcomes Stefany to the Office and the Board.

Besides the duties of the Board Secretary, Pew will be the first contact for those interested in officiating for the AZ Region and assisting with issues arising in the official's division.

Stefany has a long history with the Arizona Region, as she describes.

"I've been in the Region since I was 8 years old, going to tournaments and watching my older sisters play, although I mostly just tried to find a ball and go pepper against a wall somewhere. I finally got to play when I was 11 and played on the Metro Magic 14U team. I instantly was hooked and knew this is what I wanted to do all my life."

With two other sisters playing volleyball, Stefany's Mom teamed up to form a club called Arrowhead Juniors. "I played club for 8 years then graduated from Centennial High School and then went on to play collegiate ball at Yavapai College and Glendale Community College. I started coaching in the region in 2001 with Club Arrowhead."

"I married in 2002 and moved out to the East Valley." She adds. "The lack of clubs in the far East Valley during that time was evident so I decided to work with the directors at Club



USA VOLLEYBALL JUNIOR NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

THE ARIZONA REGION REPRESENTS WELL IN 2024



The Arizona Region of USA Volleyball congratulate all **junior medalists from our Region** at the 2024 USA Volleyball National Championships.

Arizona Storm led the parade of golds in the older age divisions by taking first in the hyper-competitive 17 Open division. Aspire and Arizona Sky added golds in the 18 American and 18 National divisions, respectively. Congratulations to all the teams, and best of luck in 2025.

<i>Division</i>	<i>AZ Region Team</i>	<i>Finish</i>
14 Freedom	A04.1	🏆 Bronze
14 Liberty	Livewire Prime	🏆 Silver
15 Open	Arizona Storm 15 Thunder	🏆 Silver
15 Patriot	Boltz 15U Desert Aces	🏆 Bronze
17 Open	Arizona Storm 17 Thunder	🏆 Gold
18 American	Aspire 18 Black	🏆 Gold
18 National	Arizona Sky 18 Gold	🏆 Gold



More info

GIRLS CLUB VOLLEYBALL
www.azregionvolleyball.org/girls

BOYS CLUB VOLLEYBALL
www.azregionvolleyball.org/boys

← Volleyball mom Mia Carrillo crafted this blinged-out volleyball BY HAND! We asked her how long it took. She says, "Maybe 30 hours and over 10,000 stones? Good time killer when I'm bored."



ETHICS & COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE

By JR Salima | AZ Region High Performance Ethics Compliance Director

Aloha, Region members! Hope your summer was awesome. As we near the new season, here are a few reminders about issues that have plagued our Region the past few years.

1. Please remind your club members and parents that the best way to notify the Region about a complaint is to file it online, using the Region QR Code . It is usually posted at all playing sites near the Site Director's table, as well as on the Region website. Please be brief in your online narrative. We will get all the details in the follow-up.
2. Help the Region prevent the loss of our certified and junior officials. Aggressive and profane outbursts, harassment and threats by parents, coaches and players have decimated our Officials Division. Even our junior officials are taking a hit! If you are a Coach and don't like a call, 1st) Know the rule, 2nd) Talk to the Lead Official, 3rd) Use the QR code to report it so the Officials' Trainers can correct the matter.
3. Club Directors: Please be aware that unless your player contracts specify an exact date of termination, all USAV/AZ Region players are committed to their clubs until the end of their respective JNC's. Even though Regionals are over, players are still committed unless a release is acquired. This especially applies in post-season play.
4. We respectfully ask Club Directors and coaches to take a more active role in helping curtail inappropriate behavior by your club's parents, relatives and spectators. Aberrant behavior severely diminishes our Region's effort in providing a positive, fun and safe environment for our young players. The appearance of "Purple Cards" at one of your matches is a great attention-getter.
5. We encourage the best of behavior at any outside tournament, NQ's or JNC's. Our Region has enjoyed a wonderful reputation at all USAV events, as well as AAU. Let's all do our part! We wish you the best of luck this coming season! Mahalo!

JR Salima

Ethics Compliance Officer | Arizona Region of USA Volleyball

Mobile: (602) 614-9263 | ECO Email: eco@azregionvolleyball.org | Email: rsalima331@yahoo.com



**SAFESPORT
HELPLINE**

www.safesporthepline.org | 866-200-0796

Partnership Opportunities - High Performance Program



We welcome partnerships to support our program's continued growth and success. If you're interested in collaborating with AZ Region High Performance, please contact Ron Pelham at azhp@azregionvolleyball.org or (520) 661-4695.

We're eager to build on this year's achievements and look forward to another exciting year of volleyball excellence!

Ronald Pelham | Arizona Region of USA Volleyball High Performance Director
Pelham2@Yahoo.com | (520) 661-4695

We are... AZHP.

07

FALL 2024



SOMEONE YOU SHOULD KNOW: MISTY LA SALVIA

"It's my dream..."

In the morning shadows of South Mountain, a beacon of fun, competition and joy shines brightly. In the summer heat, players show up around 6:30am. As they warm up on the front two sand courts, they are observed by Kevin the emu, with his watchful gaze and long black beak. Walk to the back four courts and you'll pass the husband-and-wife T-Rex skeletons next to the bony remains of a cowgirl's buckboard being pulled by her horse. Surrounding the courts are goats and horses. Welcome to Misty La Salvia's Veterans Ranch.

If you don't know the name Misty La Salvia, don't be discouraged. She is intent on keeping a low profile. Born and raised in Laveen as a third-generation dairy farmer, La Salvia was an active girl, working on the farm which she called training in itself. "Chasing a cow, catching a chicken, lifting heavy things, trying to move a stubborn cow, holding a bottle for a calf, riding a horse. All these activities we did most every day and they were the fun parts of growing up." Misty recalls. "My brothers and sister and cousins all played a lot outside; we raced, played with the dogs, jumped hay bales, climbed over fences, climbed trees, jumped out of trees, we'd play a form of dodge ball with oranges in the grove. It was a very fun lifestyle for a kid!"

La Salvia loved all sports growing up. Track, basketball, softball, volleyball and even martial arts at the South Mountain YMCA. As she notes, it got her off the farm and playing with friends.

Misty's passion for volleyball started at Laveen Elementary school. "Some parents and teachers welded two poles to tire rims, and tied a volleyball net between them, chalked out lines, and voilà, we were playing volleyball in the grass at school. I remember once one of the kids hit the ball on top of the roof of one of the classrooms, and that ended our play for the day, because it was the only ball we had. I'm still mad at Luz for that! Just kidding, she's still a good friend!"

"It is funny now to think of how some of the techniques they were teaching us were wrong, but that those teachers took the time to try and introduce volleyball and sports to us was very cool and made a big impact on our lives. "Misty recalls gratefully.



She played at Tolleson Union High School for coach Sue Hysong where she was named Captain of the team. "We were a really good, winning team with a wonderful coach." Standing 5-2 and with amazing athleticism, Misty received a scholarship to play indoor volleyball at Hawaii Pacific University, and ended up also playing softball, basketball, and running cross country for them.

"While in Hawaii, which I also consider home," Misty recounts, "I paddled outrigger canoe for team Kamehameha, surfed, competed in triathlons and on the shores of Waikiki, that is where I found the beach volleyball game. From then on, it's where I spent most of my extra time. Absolute fun and a wonderful life. All day beach, volleyball, surf, friends, evening cookouts Hawaiian Style." She smiles fondly.

When Misty returned to Arizona she was surprised to find a beach volleyball community in the desert. "I joined in whenever I could, playing pick-up games and tournaments. I was soon winning, and placing high in the top divisions, which took me to searching for top players in California. A group of us Arizonians would enter tournaments up and down the coast which was super fun. We were placing high in open level tournaments and started entering AVP tournaments."

The AVP had some stops in Arizona, and Misty ran some local tournaments to allow home teams to earn a spot into the AVP Qualifiers. She also ran some EVP

SOMEONE YOU SHOULD KNOW

Continued...

(Extreme Volleyball Professionals) sanctioned tournaments and brought them to the Valley as well.

As her playing career wound down and she was tasked with helping take care of the ranch once again, Misty decided to combine her two life's works. "Beach volleyball, being such a big and wonderful part of my life, I found it to be the thing that I would use to give back."

Explaining her mission, her passion overwhelms you. "I love how much the sport has grown, club, college, boys' and girls' high school, Olympics, etc. And though it has become very popular in areas like Scottsdale, the East Valley and other locations in Arizona, I am a Southside kid and there are not any facilities, leagues, clubs or high school beach teams on my side of town. The Southside is considered an underprivileged side of town, and there is no doubt these kids do not have near the availability of good coaching, training or even the access to most sports as some other parts of the Valley."

"We do have girl's high school indoor volleyball at many of the high schools in the area but some schools are getting nearly 100 girls trying out for the teams." Misty continues. "Once they make cuts you have a lot of displaced kids who wanted to play volleyball. And this is where the Ranch stepped in. We threw up some courts and some of the kids and adults in the neighborhood started joining in. 'If you build it, they will come.'"

The interest in the Arizona beach game has grown exponentially over the past 10 years with the AIA's addition of sand volleyball as a high school sport now reaching almost 100 high schools in the state and beach clubs around the valley making the game more popular now than ever.



"Now, the goal is to become an official Beach Hub for the schools, and the neighborhood. Another beauty of Beach Volleyball is the ohana - family. Kids can play, parents can play. If we put together a Beach Hub, then we have a local facility the schools can use, we can have sanctioned high school and college events, we can offer leagues for all ages, camps, tournaments and instruction with a fun beach atmosphere."

She says emphatically, "It's my dream."

The first part of Misty's beach legacy is her idea of a Southside Youth and Community Beach Volleyball center.

Misty's plans are much grander than just offering underprivileged youth the ability to play volleyball. Her big vision of the Ranch is to offer kids jobs, education and housing.

"Though playing volleyball is incredibly wonderful and serves many purposes, like exercise, enjoyment and friendships, I feel we have a detrimental growing problem." She says concerningly. "There are over 10,000 kids in foster care in Arizona and when they age out, often at 18 years old, they are given their possessions, sometimes in a garbage bag, and sent on their way."

She continues, "The opportunities I had because I had parents, teachers, coaches, family and friends who encouraged me, cared about me and gave me an incredibly fulfilling and happy life have given me the desire to give these kids, all our kids, the same opportunities I had."



Continue →

SOMEONE YOU SHOULD KNOW

Continued...

Misty's master plan includes -

- Recreational and Sport Activities including beach courts with stadium seating, pickleball courts, cornhole, performance skate half-pipe and an entertainment stage.
- Lodging and youth hostel and restaurant for guests, camps, tournaments and events.
- Dorms for kids to stay, where they have guidance, work, education, and encouragement.
- Education and job opportunities in sports training, sports management, exercise, fitness, hotel management, restaurant management, serving, cooking, website construction, advertising, printing signs and shirts, cleaning, maintenance and any other careers that would best suit them.

Misty sees this facility as a place to give kids a secure safe place to stay, with an encouraging atmosphere, offering work and education as a steppingstone to their next endeavor. Under guidance and support, the kids will literally run the leagues, camps, tournaments, manage courts, entertainment, lodging and all the other tasks that come from running a facility.

Such is Misty's vision for the future Southside Youth and Community Beach Volleyball Hub.

"This prototype type for a Beach Hub with opportunities for the youth to run the business, have jobs, housing and education is just the first one. If it goes well, it could be expanded to other types of businesses." She says, envisioning, "I would like to also have one for farming. The kids will run the farm, a farmer's market, classes on planting, growing, nutrition, cooking, milking cows and goats to make and sell fresh milk, ice cream, yogurt, cheese, and have an educational touristy farm store that offers the same opportunities for kids; housing, jobs, education, guidance and support."

The second part of Misty's beach legacy is her organization: Az Pro Beach.

"We have an incredible amount of high-level volleyball players in Arizona." she says glowingly. "Once school and club are done, where do they get that fix to play at a highly competitive level?"

KEVIN THE EMU



Speaking from experience, La Salvia sees the issues with following the dream of playing beach full time. "Trying to play professional is a wonderful experience, but if you have a family, job, school or obligations then it is not really feasible to just drop everything and chase the circuit. And even if you don't have the obligations and had the time to chase a pro beach circuit, the cost of traveling, lodging and tournament entries can just be too much. Not very many kids have the means to follow that path. AZ Pro Beach gives all these great players a place to play at that high level, and something to strive for, and ignite them!"

Misty's organization is already off and running. "Right now, we have been offering fun tournaments and pick-up games, for all ages and levels. And we have started the prototype for the AZ Pro Beach and are looking to find sponsors interested in making this endeavor happen. We have our first big event Sat. Sept. 28, 2024, and the word has been getting out." she says excitedly. "We have some potential big sponsors but we are very open to more support in helping make this happen."

For Misty and her vision, her currency is simple: Play. Play as much and as often as we can. "To play with us you just give us a call, and we will get you set up. 602-460-6292." Misty says invitingly.

For this 5'2" firecracker of a personality, Misty La Salvia is making the most of her love, passion and ability to share those with others.

"I feel God gave me these great opportunities in life so I could pass them on and make a real difference. And it would mean so much to me if the farm, that my family worked so hard on, and that always was an important part of contributing to society, kept a purpose of enriching lives and the community."

Q&A WITH COACH MIKE WALL

U.S. Men's National Team Assistant Coach Mike Wall took a few minutes to answer some questions for the Arizona Region of USA Volleyball.

Wall has been with the National team for the last three Olympics working on Head Coach John Speraw's staff. This year's team won the **bronze medal** sweeping Italy.

Wall talks about the Olympics and shares information about one of the few high level coaching clinics being hosted here in Phoenix.

Q. Mike, thank you for doing this. What was your biggest takeaway from this year's Olympic Men's volleyball competition?

A. Just how good athletes have gotten at medium and out of system setting and attacking. The shot variety and intentional recycling in challenging situations is so impressive. When you get a team out of system, it's still a good thing, but teams are getting better and better at getting themselves out of those situations.

Q. Was there a moment that has stayed with you since you left Paris?

A. Having the families there with the coaches and athletes. This is my third Olympics. In Rio, we had the Zika virus. In Tokyo, we had Covid. This was the first "normal" Olympics for the majority of our athletes and coaches. Having my wife and kids in the stands, along with all of the other American families supporting us was an amazing experience.

Q. You are bringing your experiences to a coaching clinic in Scottsdale in Dec. Can you tell us about that?

A. This will be our third consecutive coaches' clinic in Scottsdale. It has quickly become one of our most popular and attended events. This year we have Head Coach Matt Werle from the GCU Men's Program joining us as a lead clinician. We will be covering some new motor learning concepts, defensive and offensive systems, all fundamental skills, and of course getting out on the court with some experiential learning. The methods and principles taught are time-tested over multiple decades with both men's and women's programs. If you haven't been to a GMS coaches' clinic in recent years, we encourage you to come hang out with us. The dates are December 6-8 and the registration link is <https://my.goldmedalsquared.com/register>. We hope to see you there!

Thanks Mike. Appreciate your time.



WHY DO FANS LINE UP CAMERAS ON THE BACK OF THE COURT?



Tip from #AZVolleyballMom

If you're just starting to make highlight reels of your volleyball player, the best location to get video is directly to the back middle or back right of the court - behind your team. This location is free of line refs. Be sure to get video on the same side of the net as your player. Recording from a location behind the athlete allows coaches to see how high your player can jump and interact with teammates. And! Keep the camera still! Set it up and let it run. You can edit it down later.

Follow the AZ Region



Contacts: www.azregionvolleyball.org/contact

Web: www.azregionvolleyball.org

www.facebook.com/AZRegionVolleyball

x.com/usavaz

www.instagram.com/azregionusavolleyball



Q&A WITH CASSIDY LICHTMAN

For long-time ASU Volleyball fans, the sight of Stanford's Cassidy Lichtman on the other side of the net was a daunting one. In her four years as a Cardinal, ASU never took a set off a Lichtman squad. After a successful pro career and various charitable interests, Lichtman finds herself in the enviable position of Director of Volleyball for the first of the U.S. Professional Volleyball leagues, Athletes Unlimited.

Cassidy gave the Arizona Region of USA Volleyball a bit of her valuable time for a quick interview on her career, her pursuits and the league she is promoting and growing.

Q. Hi Cassidy. You have and continue to accomplish so much. What was it in your childhood or moments in your life have shaped and brought you through your incredible journey to AU? (Playing at Stanford, Playing Pro, P/ATH, etc)

A. "My mom was a club coach and director so I grew up in a gym and have loved volleyball for as long as I can remember. That took me to Stanford where I got to play for an incredible program and I learned so much from John Dunning and the rest of our coaching staff. I had dreamed about playing for the National team since I saw the Olympics when I was a kid, but it wasn't until I got to college that I really understood professional volleyball was an option. In the months after I graduated from Stanford I moved to Poland for my first pro season. I joined the National Team that summer as well and ended up playing for Team USA and professionally overseas for the next five years."

"The National Team taught me what it means to strive for excellence every single day. I had actually retired and was running P/ATH when Athletes Unlimited started in 2021. This was the first time in my career that someone was proposing a league that felt like it might be a real, sustainable option so I agreed to come out of retirement to play in the first two seasons. I joined the Player Executive Committee and was involved in all the decision-making during my time as a player with AU so it ended up being a really smooth transition into becoming the Director of Volleyball, where I now oversee the strategy and operations of our volleyball league."



**ATHLETES UNLIMITED
PRO VOLLEYBALL**
auprosports.com/volleyball

Q. Looking back, what was the hardest time in your volleyball career?

A. "Playing overseas was probably the hardest time. It's a great opportunity to see the world and I'm grateful for being able to make a career out of playing the game I love. The overseas life could be difficult though. You're so far from family and friends, in a country where you probably don't speak the language and you don't always have the support that you have in college or with the National team."

Q. Conversely, what was the best time in your volleyball career?

A. "Hard to pick a best time! I've loved my whole volleyball career but I'd say a few are: playing in the final four at Stanford, playing in gold medal matches with USA Volleyball and seeing the first season of AU come together."

Q. What can Junior Club Volleyball do to get players to Athletes Unlimited?

A. "Make sure all your players and parents know that AU is in town! If you can reach out to team parents and encourage them to get a group together, that might help too. We play during high school season, obviously, but many club coaches are also involved in high school and can bring their teams. It's a great, and rare, opportunity to see volleyball at the highest level!"

Cassidy Lichtman was part of the U.S. women's national volleyball team from 2011-2016.



Continued with Cassidy Lichtman

Q. Why is Athletes Unlimited different from the other Pro leagues now popping up around the country the past few years?

A. "Instead of having city-based teams like traditional leagues, we bring our whole roster of pros to one city and play our entire competition there. It's a condensed, fast-paced season with an all-star roster, so every match feels like a playoff game. Our players are competing not only on their teams but as individuals, scoring points on a leaderboard based on how much they win and their own performance. So, fans can choose their favorite player and root them on!"

Q. Your TED talk was amazing. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ptwu2JDz6wU>) How do you carry that message of "The Power in your Voice" to the fans and young women AU interacts with?



A. "AU is really built around empowering the voices of our athletes. They help make all the decisions around our league and I think that comes through during our competitions. Our venue also includes many related features, giving the athletes the opportunity to share causes they care about, women who have inspired them or books they've found impactful. We take every opportunity to give them a voice on and off the court."

Q. Where can the Valley see these amazing professionals compete for AU?

A. "We play from the first week of October through the first week of November at Arizona Athletic Grounds in Mesa, and you can

find the schedule at <https://auprosports.com/volleyball/schedule/2024/>"

Thank you, Cassidy. Best of luck in the seasons ahead.

**JOIN THE
AZ REGION**

www.azregionvolleyball.org



"True" to Form: Out-of-State Team finds Opportunities with the AZ Region of USA Volleyball

An adult volleyball team out of New Mexico - N.M. True - chose to join the Arizona Region of USA Volleyball to play competitively. You see, Sun Country Region, (which is all of NM and part of west Texas), does not offer adult tournaments.

We are honored to share Katie Rodhouse's story with you!



Traveling to the USA Volleyball (USAV) Open National Championships is more than just a chance to compete at the highest level—it's an unforgettable experience that embodies the spirit of teamwork, camaraderie, and passion for the sport. For our adult women's volleyball team, this event offers a unique blend of intense competition and the joy of sharing the journey with our friends and supporters.

The atmosphere at Nationals is electric, filled with excitement and mutual respect among players and officials from diverse backgrounds. It's a celebration of volleyball, where lifelong friendships are forged, and old friendships are rekindled. The event also offers opportunities to watch and learn from high-level players, enhancing our own game and appreciation for the sport.

Our team had the opportunity to attend this year's Nationals, held in Columbus, OH. We played nine different teams from across the United States, all while pushing ourselves and our team to bring our best to the court. We explored Columbus, ate a lot of German food, and rode some rollercoasters.

Traveling to the USAV Open National Championships as an adult volleyball team was a rewarding and enriching experience. It's a long journey beginning as soon as the prior year's nationals concludes that combines the thrill of high-level competition with the joys of team bonding and exploration. For our team, National is more than just a tournament—it's a highlight of our year and a testament to the enduring power of this wonderful sport to our lives.

N.M. True hopes to see you all at next year's USAV Open Nationals in Denver!

ADULT OPEN NATIONALS
www.azregionvolleyball.org



SOCIAL MEDIA, MINORS, AND MISCONDUCT

By Jen Barber | #AZVolleyballMom
AZ Region Communications Manager

636.

That's the number of educator discipline cases opened just this year in Arizona.

A few simple policies can keep your children - and your volleyball club - out of trouble.

Parenting during the rise of social media is one of the toughest challenges - not just for parents, but also for teachers and coaches.

My background in communications stretches back to the 1980's when I started a career in broadcast news. Back then, we had a minute and 20 seconds to keep your attention long enough to tell you about the day's events.

Fast forward. The convenience of news at your fingertips has led to the advent of the "10 second rule." In less than 10 seconds, your mind has decided to stay... or decided to scroll.

A dance studio director in New Mexico recently made the decision to close shop. When I asked why, she told me she simply can't compete with "the phones." In a frustrated tone, she added the dancers would text her last minute saying they couldn't make it to the studio - in violation of the dance academy's policy. You see, her minor clients are required to have a **parent** involved in all digital communications.

And that should be YOUR policy, too.

My current line of work revolves around a variety of communications. Mostly, I help my clients by writing and designing their social media. A few years ago, I helped a volleyball club draft a social media policy.

I'll link the social media policy suggestions to the Arizona Region's website. ***It's not mandated. In fact, it's completely up to YOU if you'd like to have a social media policy.*** If you do, I hope the guidelines are helpful.

VOLLEYBALL & SOCIAL MEDIA

The pandemic is to credit for motivating parents to find alternative ways to watch games. If you didn't have the golden wristband to get indoors to cheer on your team, you probably watched a live stream on Facebook.

Here's the thing about live streaming games... you want your team to have the advantage on game day.

1. Do not live stream practices. Practices are a time for teams to privately work out game strategy.
2. Any live streams of games should be in private groups where you have control of comments.



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICIES

www.azregionvolleyball.org/coaches

SOCIAL MEDIA, MINORS, AND MISCONDUCT

Continued...

Private social media group pages also allow for “privacy” of your minor athletes.

An athlete’s health/injury status should not be made public. If Sally hurt her knee, no one should know about this through social media. That is a private matter for Sally, her parents, and her coach.

It’s all too easy for a competing team to get a hold of the information and use it to their advantage. It’s also a great way to start speculation and unnecessary rumors.

Private social media **is useful** for positive parent communication. As the parent of a player in college, our team parents still use social media to let each other know where to park, which entrance to use to get into the gym, ticket links. when the team is warming up, etc.

COACHES & MINORS COMMUNICATING

USA Volleyball has ZERO TOLERANCE for abuse and misconduct. This includes not only on-court safety, but also off-court safety in any part of USA Volleyball’s programs.

We encourage you to visit our website at www.azregionvolleyball.org/safesport to find out more about SafeSport and how to report abuse.

Remember, abuse can come in all forms. And one of them is through communications.

While Arizona has no laws on the books about minors engaging in communications with adults through use of phones and computers, we can point to “best practices” through the Arizona State Board of Education.

Two years ago, the Board established these guidelines for social media and cellular telephone

use between students and school personnel, including administrators, teachers, coaches, and counselors:

- include a **parent**, another educator, or supervisor on any communication with students that could be construed as inappropriate
- create a large group messaging thread with **other adults** in the conversation
- only communicate with students regarding academic or extracurricular activities
- refrain from communication outside of academic and extracurricular scheduled hours

My suggestions include a few more policies.

- Do not “friend” or “follow” minors in social media
- Do not post any photos you would not want your boss to see or for you to use as a profile picture of you
- Do not post photos of yourself in small swimwear/clothing
- Do not post photos of yourself partying
- Do not post photos of yourself using alcohol or under the influence of drugs/alcohol
- A coach and a **parent** should have full administrative control over any social media team pages
- Social media policies should be in writing, signed, and kept on file
- Establish a “no-contact” time. Example, 9pm to 8am, or even specific days of the week

NEED FOR STRICTER POLICIES?

Despite the State Board of Education’s best practices policy, hundreds of Arizona educators are under investigation for a variety of offenses, many of which involve communication.

In Oklahoma, a new law mandates parental oversight for teacher-student digital communication. This came about after court records revealed 32,000 text messages between a teacher and a student.

Common sense communication policies are a good start. Establishing guidelines and **putting them in writing has become necessary.**

YOU are the first line of defense in protecting the children in your organization.

Jen Barber | #AZVolleyballMom
AZ Region of USA Volleyball Communications Manager



"From the First Serve to the Final Farewell: Reflecting on 24 Years of Junior Beach Volleyball Memories"

By Eric Hodgson
Arizona Region of USA Volleyball

It was May of 2001. A few months after inaugurating George W. Bush as the 43rd president of the United States. A few months before the Arizona Diamondbacks won their first and only World Series. And a few months before our lives would be irrevocably changed forever when foreign terrorists flew planes into the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon, and were forced into the ground in Pennsylvania.

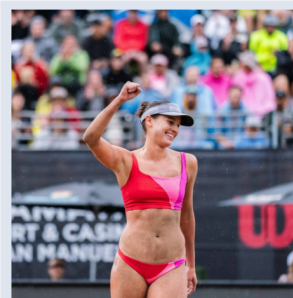
In the stifling heat of the Arizona desert, the Arizona Region of USA Volleyball put together a program which would last another 24 years. Played at Victory Lane Sports Park in the West Valley, the Junior Beach Program was born out of the need and desire to get juniors playing beach volleyball.

- No beach clubs existed at the time.
- The landscape for beach volleyball was as barren as the desert surrounding the eight lighted courts at the Victory Lane complex.
- Our program existed 9 years before the NCAA declared beach volleyball a sanctioned sport - and 11 years before it started to gain traction.
- The program was in its 13th year before the University of Arizona started its program - the first collegiate program in the state.
- The AZ Region Junior Beach program was in its 11th year before the AIA, Arizona Interscholastic Association, designated beach volleyball a high school sport with the support and urging of the Arizona Region of USA Volleyball.

But much like monsoon rains revitalizing the desert, the AZ Region's Junior Beach program started and fostered playing opportunities for boys and girls athletes from the East Valley, Tucson and Flagstaff who would come down to play the one-night tournaments.

The cost started at \$20 per player to register and \$10 per tournament. Other than one season, the cost remained the same for all 24 years, something unheard of in the spiraling financial typhoon of youth sports.

One of the earliest and steadfast rules for the 24 years of the program was a simple one: no parents - and later on -



Betsi Flint, a 6-time AVP Champion got her start in the AZ Region's Junior Beach program.

no coaches were allowed on the sand. You would watch players who were off a match go sit on the sidelines just to enjoy the respite of no one coaching them. The quiet for those athletes was glorious.

The other non-negotiable from the program was a simple one: play as much we can in the time allotted. Often, a team would go winless in pool play. But knowing they only get better with more reps and play, would be scheduled into the bracket. Even if they lost there, tournament organizers would often find an open court and encourage those teams to play each other for more experience.

All you needed was a partner and an open mind. For many of the juniors starting to play, beach was something they had heard of, but playing was a different story. They would come out and get shellacked 15-2, 15-4 in their first match, but the lure of no coaches, no parents and figuring things out for themselves kept them coming back. It was common to see those same players waxing teams a few tournaments later.

Medals were awarded at the end of the night in each age division, in both boys and girls. For a few years T-shirts were also given to the winning pairs.

The program could not have existed without the support of Mike Krueger of Victory Lane Sports Park. From the beginning, Krueger made the Jr. Beach program a priority for the park's summer schedule knowing the juniors were a population he wanted in the park to align with his softball and baseball leagues and tournaments. He always gave the program first crack at dates and times and took less money than was probably fair to keep the cost to the athletes down.

In its heyday, the Junior Beach Program saw over 500 athletes playing in a season, one memorable night trying to accommodate 50+ teams on 8 courts. The program went from 2 tournaments a week to three and added specialty tournaments, namely the Mother's and Father's Day tournaments. Coed and King and Queen of the Beach tournaments were packed. For a few years, the AZ Region even experimented with all-night tournaments to coincide with Victory Lane all-night softball tournaments.

Despite all these playing opportunities, rarely were there complaints. The beach "vibe" often spoken about by adult beach players spilled over into these young athletes and parents. The anxiety of indoor volleyball was a stark contrast as rivals would sit and chat with each other, laugh and even play together. Parents who were screaming at each other on Saturdays would sit next to each other and cheer all the athletes on. With rare exceptions, the beach vibe was alive and well until the final ball dropped on July 18th of this year.



One of the greatest parts of the program were the athletes who sprang from those early years and saw success down the road. Betsi Flint, a multiple AVP and FIVB beach winner started coming to the tournaments at 10-years-old. This past August, she unveiled her plaque on the Manhattan Beach pier for winning last year's tournament. Betsi has been a staple on the AVP and FIVB tours since 2015. She's racked up 7 AVP titles and 5 FIVB titles and is a consistent threat.

"I'm surprised the Arizona Junior Beach Program is coming to an end." She laments. "Being a part of this program set me up for success at the High School, collegiate, and professional level. I know so many indoor and beach players thrived in the sport of volleyball because of this program. I am grateful for all the people behind the scenes who have impacted so many young athletes. They always gave me the belief that I could pursue volleyball at the next level."

Phoenix native Hailey Harward made her mark in 2022, her first AVP season, by earning a third-place finish in New Orleans and going undefeated in Ft. Lauderdale to win her first of 2 AVP titles. Harward graduated from USC with Back-to-Back NCAA Beach Volleyball National Championships in 2021 and 2022. Hailey was an early and often participant in the Jr. Beach Program.



Hailey Harward is a Phoenix native who made her mark in 2022, her first AVP season, by earning a third-place finish in New Orleans and going undefeated in Ft. Lauderdale to win her first AVP Title.

"I'm really sad to see this program come to an end. I remember playing in so many tournaments through this program when I was growing up and it's really how I fell in love with the game of beach volleyball." Harward said.

Other notables early on included 2020 Olympian Sarah Sponcil, several professional players including Madi Kingdon, Khalia Lanier and Tara Mueller and dozens of players who have and currently inhabit the rosters of collegiate beach programs around the United States.

In recent years, the number of participants in the program began to dwindle. Several beach clubs formed and urged athletes to shy away from playing in the program, opting for their own tournaments or trainings instead. The volleyball epicenter in the AZ Region shifted to the East Valley. And for a lot of parents, the drive across town in the molasses like 5 o'clock traffic and the increased focus on the heat made their decision much easier.

Beach volleyball also is accessible in so many other options today versus 24 years ago. In addition to high school and club programs, many parks, schools and colleges have added beach courts. Some city parks and recreation departments also made beach volleyball a sport for their respective youth.

In the last few years, there has also been a direct correlation between the need for parents to see hurried results versus letting athletes figure things out for themselves. Despite the science telling us that players learn best this way, Adults find the need for programming, camps, clinics and private lessons to further their athletes along more quickly. While all of these are more than viable options, the idea of letting an athlete solve problems and learn is becoming extinct in the young sports sphere.

All of these factors saw the program's decline begin about 3 years ago. This season, the Junior Beach staff of Jayda Chee, Sam Baer and Summer Begay rolled in at 5pm every tournament day, put out the volleyballs, put together the paperwork for the sign ups, created pools and began the tournament roughly at 6:05pm. These folks who worked tournaments over the 24 years are the true heroes of the Junior Beach program, learning how to put together a tournament on the fly with no pre sign up or registration. If your name was on the sign-up roster by 6pm, you were playing. No exceptions!

The staffs that the AZ Region had in past years, many of whom played in the same program they were now overseeing, have gone on to playing and professional careers. Their attention to detail, customer service and helping the growth of beach volleyball cannot be understated.

The AZ Region will continue to move the beach game forward in between the clubs, the facilities and promoters currently occupying the space. In August, with some help from the Region, the AIA announced boy's beach volleyball was granted an "emerging sport" status for the 2024-25 school year - opening yet another avenue for the game and its participants.

Thank you to all those players, parents and staff that made this the longest running program in the 35-year history of the Arizona Region of USA Volleyball.

Betsi Flint, her daughter Cora, and her husband Chase unveils her Manhattan Beach Pier plaque.



Cronkite News covered the history of the AZ Region

Junior Beach program July 9, 2024. Please visit their YouTube to watch.





USA Volleyball NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

APRIL 25-27, 2025
2025 USA Volleyball Girls 18s Junior National Championship
Salt Lake City, Utah

JUNE 21-24, 2025
2025 USA Volleyball Girls Junior National Championship 10-13s
Kansas City Convention Center, Kansas City, MO

JUNE 25-JULY 3, 2025
2025 USA Volleyball Girls Junior National Championship 14-17s
Dallas, Texas

JULY 3-6, 2025
2025 Boys Junior National Championship
Minneapolis Convention Center, Minneapolis, Minn.

ADULT OPEN NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP
DENVER, COLORADO
MAY 23-28, 2025

USA ALL-STAR VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIP
MADISON, WISCONSIN
JULY 24-27, 2025

Junior Boys & Girls teams in the Arizona Region of USA Volleyball, and adult teams, can earn Bids to USA Volleyball Junior National Championships.

The Arizona Region of USA Volleyball also provide National Club Qualifiers as an additional opportunity to qualify for national championships.

Best wishes to all teams working toward earning Bids this season!

USAVolleyball.org/events

AZHP 2025

ARIZONA REGION OF USA VOLLEYBALL

HIGH PERFORMANCE

TEAMS COMPETE AT THE

USA ALL-STAR CHAMPIONSHIPS

- Tryout/Clinic: May 16th-18th
- Training Week: July 14th-20th
- Travel Dates: July 22nd-28th
- USA All-Star Championships:

July 24-27, 2025 in Madison, WI

www.azregionvolleyball.org/highperformance



AZ REGION NATIONAL CLUB QUALIFIERS

AZ REGION BOYS
American National Qualifier
TBA

AZ REGION GIRLS 18 ONLY
National Club Qualifier
March 1 & 2, 2025

AZ REGION GIRLS 13-15s
National Club Qualifier
April 5-6, 2025

AZ REGION GIRLS 11-12s & 16-17s
National Club Qualifier
April 12-13, 2025

BOOKMARK JUNIOR PAGES



www.azregionvolleyball.org/juniors

We our sponsors!



ALL VOLLEYBALL



molten[®]

For the real game

