

To: All Past, Present and Future Families of SSGA

From: Rett Ware, Owner, President and Head Coach

Date: 2/7/18

Re: Our Statement regarding the recent scandal with USAG and Larry Nassar

SSGA was opened in September of 2012 with the mission statement "Developing Confidence and Character Through Gymnastics". I wanted to open a gym where the gymnasts were taken care of and felt safe; that has been in the forefront of my personal vision since I first dreamed of opening a gymnastics school when I was 12 years old. If gymnasts are safe, cared for and supported, they are confident and here at SSGA our entire staff is committed to the confidence, safety and well-being of the gymnasts in our care.

The entire staff and gymnastics community feels the pain of the athletes hurt by Nassar and the other upper echelon of USAG staff who did not protect the athletes. I know a few of the affected women personally, as well as having met Larry on a few occasions, and I have to say, he had me fooled as well. I am as disgusted as you are that there were people who not only failed to protect the minors in their care, but also failed to accept any blame and instead pointed their fingers elsewhere in an effort to avoid legal implications. I know I have put this statement out later than many other gyms, but because I know some of the affected women quite well, I needed some additional time to process the information, as well as time to reach out to them personally before I made a public statement as the owner of SSGA.

We at SSGA do not accept what happened to these incredible young women, and we join the majority of gymnastics professionals that make up USA Gymnastics who do what's right for young athletes every day. We are all pushing for major change in the upper management and climate of USAG, so true change can take place in EVERY club, to protect EVERY athlete in EVERY situation EVERY time.

From the moment SSGA opened its doors, we already have had most of the safety policies in place that most gyms are now implementing in reaction to the Nassar scandal. Our policies for our staff include, and have always included:

- No team travel (gymnasts travel & stay in hotels with their parents, not our coaching staff)

- No sleepovers at the gym

- Two adult staff are required to be present with a gymnast at all times, and said adults must be out in the open with athletes at all times. No SSGA staff member is allowed to be alone with a gymnast in any circumstances at any time and it is in our policies that if this was ever to happen, immediate termination & reporting to authorities for the involved employee would result.

- Coaches do not communicate with gymnast through texting or social media. The only exception to this is myself, as the head coach, communicate with the older optional athletes about anything gymnastics related: physical therapy, being late to practice, college recruiting, etc.

- We do not allow our staff to negotiate babysitting with our customers through anything having to do with the gym. We do not give out contact info to either party, even if its mutually okayed by both parties. We encourage our staff not to take private babysitting jobs with current customers.

- Parents are required to take young children to the bathroom, not SSGA Staff.
- We have open viewing areas and open viewing policies.
- We encourage parents and athletes to have open lines of communication with management to ask questions or share any concerns.
- We run mandatory CORI and SORI checks for all staff.
- We run National Background Checks for all Team Coaches.
- Our entire staff was required to take and pass the USOC's Safe Sport program a full year before the deadline set by USA Gymnastics in order to continue employment at SSGA.
- We hold mandatory department head staff meetings and education weekly for our Department Leaders and Team Coaches, and mandatory staff meetings every 10 weeks with our entire staff.
- We have Locker Room/Restroom Safety Policies, Misconduct Prevention Policies and Social Media Policies that are in place, are signed by every staff member, and the policies are then enforced by management.

Additionally, we are going to add video cameras in both gyms that have monitors available for management and parents for viewing. In addition, in the team gym, a monitor is being set up in the gym so the coaches can see all the lobby and hallway traffic from inside the gym at all times.

We are also tightening up policies inside the team gym that say the gymnasts must bring all the items they need into the gym at the beginning of practice, and must travel to the bathroom in groups.

We also need your help. If you ever see anything or anyone out of the ordinary at SSGA, please speak up. Contact a staff member immediately, they are all trained as to what to do. Ask anyone you see that does not seem to be attached to a child who they are there to pick up and report any suspicious response or actions immediately. This goes for all adults at SSGA, even our staff. Speak up if something is out of the ordinary. We can and will work together to keep **all** the children at SSGA safe.

The whole gymnastics community is **STRONG**. We will band together to make sure something like this never happens again, and that those who deserve to be punished for their actions will be punished.

The safety of the gymnasts is always the #1 priority at SSGA.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns at any time.

Sincerely,

Rett Ware

Owner and Head Coach at SSGA

P.S. We will not be discussing the Nassar/USAG events with the gymnasts at the gym- even the team gymnasts- at this time. We feel each family should make their own personal choice as to when, what, and how much they wish to discuss with their own children. If there is anything we can do to help, or anything you would like us to know in regards to these family discussions, please let us know.

