Letters in Support of the Mike Erickson Basketball Court

- Andrea Correia
- Nancy Thiele
- Ian Collins
- Russ Peterich
- Jared Durling
- Scott Meizen
- Dr. Guzman

Recommendation to Rename the Piner High School Gymnasium Court to the "Coach Mike Erickson Court"

It is with great pride and respect that I recommend the Piner High School Gymnasium court be renamed the **"Coach Mike Erickson Court"** in honor of Coach Mike Erickson's extraordinary service and lasting contributions to Piner High School, its students, and the greater Santa Rosa community.

Coach Erickson had served as the Boys Varsity Basketball Coach at Piner High School from 1991- 2024. The 2023–2024 season marked his 33rd year leading the program—an extraordinary legacy of commitment, perseverance, and leadership.

Coach Erickson was far more than a basketball coach—he is a mentor, teacher, and role model whose influence extends well beyond the court. He has guided generations of young men, instilling in them the values of teamwork, resilience, and integrity. His former players frequently return to support the program, assist with practices, and mentor current athletes—a true testament to the enduring impact he has had on their lives.

In the classroom, Coach Erickson taught College Foundation courses to freshmen, helping them build organization, responsibility, and the life skills essential for success beyond high school. His commitment to student growth reflects his belief that education and athletics together foster character, discipline, and lifelong learning. He just retired this past school year.

Coach Erickson's influence is deeply woven into the fabric of Piner High School. He serves on the **Piner High School Hall of Fame Board**, is a seasoned fundraiser for athletics, and organizes the prestigious **Sonoma County Classic Basketball Tournament**. Across the North Bay, he is recognized as one of the region's most respected and accomplished coaches, as well as a mentor to numerous young coaches—many of whom once played for him.

Under his leadership, Piner High School has achieved remarkable success, earning **seven North Bay League championships** and **ten second-place finishes** in both the North Bay and former Sonoma County Leagues. With over three decades of victories and milestones, His numerous honors include:

- **Press Democrat Redwood Empire Coach of the Year** (1999, 2000, 2005)
- **YSN 365 Coach of the Year** (2015)
- **NorCal Preps Division 3 Coaching Award** (2002)
- **Multiple North Bay League Coach of the Year Awards**, most recently in 2020

Despite his many achievements, Coach Erickson remains humble and student-centered, often reminding others, *"It's about the kids, not me."*

As John Wooden once said, *"People want to believe you are sincerely interested in them as persons, not just for what they can do for you."* Coach Mike Erickson embodies that principle completely—leading with integrity, compassion, and an unwavering belief in the potential of every student-athlete.

Renaming the Piner High School Gymnasium court in his honor will not only recognize his decades of service and historic success, but will also serve as a lasting symbol of the values he has instilled in generations of Piner students: perseverance, humility, teamwork, and excellence.

Respectfully submitted,
Mrs. Andrea Correia
Principal, Piner High School

From the Desk of

Nancy Thiele

October 28, 2024

Dear Ms.Correia,

It is an honor to write a letter of recommendation for Coach Mike Erickson. I met Coach Erickson in 2015. I am a retired employee of Piner High School. I attended many basketball games and also worked with Coach Erickson on his annual Sonoma County Classic.

He has done so much for the Piner Community and especially all the players he has coached over the years. Coach Erickson showed all of his players to be humble, have pride, work hard and mostly show respect.

A tribute to him last year showed how much his players respected him. As many former players came to the tribute to show Coach Erickson their respect for him.

It would be a great honor to name the Piner Gym Basketball Court in his name.

Thank you,

Nancy Thiele
Retired Piner Business Office

October 25, 2024

Mrs. Andrea Correia,

I'm writing to formally endorse renaming the gym floor in honor of Coach Erickson. As someone who's poured countless hours of blood, sweat and tears in that space, I can't think of anyone more fitting to have their name permanently associated with it.

Coach Erickson's impact goes far beyond his success as head coach. He's been a mentor, a guide, and a beacon of hope for so many, especially for those of us who needed more than just a coach. His late nights spent mentoring troubled youth, the extra hours he dedicated to open gyms, and the countless lives he transformed, including mine, are a testament to his lasting legacy.

I wouldn't be where I am today without his guidance, and I know I'm not alone in that sentiment. Renaming the gym after him would not only celebrate his achievements but also honor the countless lives he's changed.

Very respectfully,

Ian Collins, MBA

P.S. In the wise words of Coach E, "This would be the best thing since sliced bread."

To Whom It May Concern,

I was a physical education and science teacher, coach, and athletic director at Montgomery High School from 1966 until my retirement 2003. For the next 13 years, I was the District Athletic Director and Coordinator for the five middle schools and five high schools in the Santa Rosa City School District. During this time, I worked closely with administrators, athletic directors and coaches.

I have known Mike Erickson for the past 30 years as a teacher, basketball coach, and a friend. He has been an outstanding role model for students, basketball players, and colleagues. As a coach, mentor and teacher he has shown a great deal of respect and patience in dealing with situations that arise in teaching and coaching young student athletes. He is very skillful in connecting with student athletes that are fortunate enough to be associated with him. Mike has always displayed the highest moral and ethical standards with parents, colleagues, participants, and students. Even in very trying times on the basketball court or in the stands, he has shown that he can calmly take control of the situation and lead by example. Respect for Mike has been demonstrated by the number of students and players that come back to support Piner High School and his basketball program.

Mike Erickson has developed one of the most competitive, well disciplined, and well coached basketball programs in northern California. He has sponsored the Sonoma County Basketball Classic for the past 30 years. No matter what skills his players have on the first day of practice, when the league season starts, his team is able to compete with teams that may be more talented. He is the type of coach that knows the skills necessary to create a competitive team. As a coach, he serves as a strong role model to his players. Mike sets reasonable limits with clearly defined consequences and is consistent. He is always willing to listen to the opinions of others and responds to his players in a professional manner. Mike is one of the most caring and highly respected coaches I know.

I am pleased to see Mike is being considered to be honored by having his name posted in the Piner gymnasium. I commend Mike for the time and effort he has dedicated to the teaching profession and coaching at Piner High School.

Sincerely,

Russ Peterich Russ Peterich

Retired Teacher, Coach and District Athletic Director

My family's connection with Coach Mike Erickson goes back to 1998. All three of us Durling boys had the privilege of playing for him between 1998 and 2004: Years that shaped not only our athletic journeys, but our lives as a whole.

We grew up in the Mark West School District and attended Rincon Valley Middle School before heading into high school, where our options included Maria Carrillo, Cardinal Newman, or Piner. Like many kids growing up in Santa Rosa, we were surrounded by the Cardinal Newman culture, attending St. Rose CYO, going to summer camps with Coach Bonfigli, and admiring what they had built over there. The Newman gym, named after longtime coach John Fitzgerald, stood as a symbol of tradition and legacy, one that continued through his sons, Jack and Pat, both of whom two of us Durling boys later had the privilege of playing under.

Although I never met Coach John Fitzgerald, I learned early on about his impact: 18 years of building a program that still carries his name and influence. As a kid, Newman felt like "home" to me because of my years playing CYO ball for St. Rose. It was where I first learned about legacy, leadership, and what it meant to be part of something bigger than yourself.

But in the end, it was my older brother Ryan who chose a different path. Based on where we lived, we had a choice, and for a few different reasons, he decided to attend Piner. That single choice changed everything for us, for all the best reasons one can think. It paved the way for me and my younger brother, Keith, who attended Comstock Middle before following suit. That decision marked the start of an unforgettable era for our family and the beginning of our lifelong connection with Coach Erickson.

While I was still at Rincon Valley, I spent countless evenings in the stands watching Ryan's games. That's where I first met Coach Erickson and his assistants, Mark "Flo" Flores, Mr. Greco, "Ice Man," and others who helped shape the Piner program. I was just a 13-year-old kid with a basketball in hand, shooting around at halftime and hoping to impress. One day, during halftime at a game, Coach Flo came over and asked where I planned to go to high school. At the time, I hadn't decided, but that question, and the sense of family and community I saw in Piner's basketball program, changed everything. I could tell that Coach Erickson and Flo already had a sense of where they could mold me as a young player who was eager to shoot, and by shooting, it was usually a deep three.

From that moment on, I was drawn to the culture that Coach Erickson had built: One defined by trust, opportunity, and belonging. I started attending summer league games, traveling to tournaments as far as Las Vegas, and eventually joining practices and scrimmages, even before I was officially in high school. That early inclusion and the faith Coach showed in me solidified my decision to become a Prospector, and helped me understand the true meaning of "Oooohh ahhhhh, you wish you were a prospect!"

Those years between 1998 and 2002 were truly special. Many will argue, and I'll agree, that they represented one of the golden eras of Piner basketball. Under Coach Erickson's leadership, the program captured Arcata Tournament titles, Sonoma County Classic championships, and multiple league championship and NCS appearances. I was lucky enough to witness and play with many of the players of the 1999 Hall of Fame induction team, one of which was my older brother Ryan Durling. The run they had that year, and a few years following was unforgettable. It was electric.

What stood out most was the way older players embraced the younger ones. It wasn't just about playing basketball; it was about helping each other grow. Many of the guys would stay late after practice to play with me, offering advice and challenging me to get better. One of those players was Treut Sperry: Someone many still consider the best to ever come out of Piner High, and who was inducted into the Piner High Athletic Hall of Fame in 2019.

I can still remember those long nights in the gym, working on fundamentals with Treut: Drills, shooting sessions, and plenty of intense 1-on-1 games that usually ended with both of us drenched in sweat and refusing to leave until one had the edge. Over time, those battles taught me more than any drill ever could. They showed me what it meant to compete with purpose, to push myself, and to refine the small details that make great players even better.

Looking back, that opportunity only existed because of what Coach Erickson had instilled in his players: A culture of inclusivity, competitiveness, and pride in helping the next generation. The lessons that Treut passed down to me were a direct reflection of Coach's influence, and when my turn came, I did my best to carry that same spirit forward for the players who came after me.

In 2002, we made Piner history by reaching the first NorCal State Championship appearance under Coach Erickson, and possibly the first in the history of Piner basketball. I'll never forget that run, playing through a fractured wrist in the league playoffs and our final game at Foothill High School in Sacramento, not out of obligation, but because Coach Erickson taught us toughness, accountability, and pride. He never demanded that we play through pain, but his belief in our resilience made us want to push further for ourselves and for each other. That mindset helped me continue playing basketball at the collegiate level, something I owe, in large part, to him.

Coach Erickson was more than a coach. He was a mentor, a teacher, and a role model. He taught many of us our first typing lessons, but more importantly, he taught us life lessons: How to lead, how to stay disciplined, and how to pursue our goals with purpose. His motivation was never built on yelling or intimidation; instead, he inspired through integrity and community. He had a special way to help you understand that you had more in you than you realized, and although

you could clearly tell he was mad or frustrated, he channeled it in a way for us to see that there was another way to improve from our challenges and mistakes. Through the years, Piner was not known for having tall athletes. His teams often lacked height or flash, but they made up for it with heart, hard work, and the fundamentals. What we called "Early O", "Frisco" or a full court press named after "Flo". Every player who wore that Piner jersey knew they were part of something greater than themselves, and throughout those years, the Piner High School gymnasium was often at capacity, with people standing around the baselines just to witness the action and electricity of the program.

Coach Erickson also created a safe space for us, a literal home away from home. If we ever wanted to get shots up, we knew all it took was a quick call to him at home. Within minutes, he'd show up in his infamous blue Ford Probe to unlock the gym. Those open gyms became legendary, not just for Piner players, but for athletes from across Sonoma County. Rival schools, alumni, and college players all came together to compete, to grow, and to share the same respect for the game that Coach had instilled in all of us. Those who know those competitive open gyms, also know about the process of picking teams, going shirts and skins, and doing everything you could to stay on the winner's court, because in some days if you lost, you could be waiting a while to get another chance at keeping your spot on the court.

Even beyond basketball, he gave us opportunities to work, stay busy, and learn responsibility, whether it was helping him paint houses in the off-season or finding ways to keep us connected and motivated. Because I played soccer at Piner, our fall season led up to the winter Basketball season, and not once did coach Erickson share a worry or concern for me playing any other sports that could hinder my ability to play basketball, and although I was fortunate enough to skip the conditioning that the basketball program had prior to the season because I was still wrapped up in soccer, I always heard stories about how challenging and rewarding those runs around the local neighborhood were.

Our entire family, including our late mother, who served proudly in the Piner Boosters Club, held Coach Erickson in the highest regard. She would be here today, without question, expressing her gratitude and admiration for a man who meant so much to her three boys.

Coach Erickson's impact extends far beyond wins and banners. He built character, community, and lifelong friendships. He gave young men, including me, the belief that we could achieve more than we thought possible.

Though I can't be there in person today, I can easily picture the incredible support filling the room, former players, families, friends, students and fans, all gathered to celebrate a man whose impact has spanned nearly three decades at Piner High School.

Naming the Piner Gymnasium Court after Coach Mike Erickson is more than appropriate; it's a well-deserved tribute to a legacy that has shaped generations. In fact, naming the gym after Coach Erickson feels inevitable, but many of us believe it shouldn't stop there. There ought to be a street named after him, for the path he paved (and painted) for all of us.

Thank you, Coach, for your dedication, your mentorship, and the lasting example you've set for all of us. Now, as a father of two, I find myself leaning on the lessons you taught, about hard work, humility, and believing in something bigger than yourself. I hope to pass those same values on to my children, so that they can live, grow, and play with the same spirit you instilled in all of us. We are who we are, in part, because of you. There will never be another like Coach Erickson, and we're all better for having been part of his story.

Jared Durling

Class of 2002

SANTA ROSA CITY SCHOOLS

Andrea Correia <acorreia@srcs.k12.ca.us>

Mike Erickson Gym

1 message

Scott Meinzen <scott_meinzen@yahoo.com> Tue, Oct 21, 2025 at 12:25 PM
To: "acorreia@srcs.k12.ca.us" <acorreia@srcs.k12.ca.us>

Dear Principal Correia,
I graduated from Piner in 1992 and was a member of Coach Erickson's first varsity basketball season.
There is no doubt that Mike is deserving of having the gym named after him.
Not only does Mike have an incredible tenure at Piner, but he has also been both a coach and a life-mentor to many, many players. His dedication to sportsmanship AND competitive greatness has helped boys become leaders with honor and confidence.

I consider myself very lucky to have had the opportunity to have been coached by Mike and I wish to see his legacy enshrined via the naming of the Piner in his name.

Thank you

Scott Meinzen

Dear Members of the Santa Rosa City Schools Board of Education,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to formally propose renaming the gym floor at Piner High School to "Coach Mike Erickson Court." This honors an individual whose unique dedication, unwavering passion, and exceptional leadership have profoundly impacted the students, athletes, and community.

Coach Mike Erickson served as a beloved coach and mentor at Piner High School for 33 years, shaping the lives of countless young athletes through his leadership on and off the court. His commitment to fostering sportsmanship, personal growth, and academic success made him a pillar of our school community. For many students, his influence extended far beyond the game, as he consistently instilled values of perseverance, teamwork, and integrity.

Renaming the gym floor to "Coach Mike Erickson Court" would be a fitting tribute to his legacy. This gesture honors his contributions and is an enduring reminder to future generations of the profound difference one can make in their lives.

Officially, dedicating the gym floor in his name will preserve his memory and inspire others to embody the principles he passionately upheld.

Thank you for considering this request. I am grateful for the Board's time and attention to this matter. I kindly request your support renaming the Piner gym floor to "Coach Mike Erickson Court." This change will resonate deeply with the Piner High School community and serve as a lasting tribute to a man who gave so much to the school.

I look forward to discussing this proposal further and am happy to provide any additional information or support as needed.

Sincerely,

Dr. Anna-Maria Guzman/Former PHS teacher and administrator in SRCS