

Handshake University teaches sportsmanship and other life skills  
By Gary Abbott, USA Wrestling

The handshake has a very strong and important tradition within wrestling. At every level of the sport, a wrestling match includes this procedure as part of the contest.

Wrestlers shake hands at the start of each match, and at the conclusion of the bout. In international wrestling, athletes also shake the hands of their opponent's coach after the match and often shake hands with the officials. At the conclusion of wrestling dual meets, the athletes and coaches from each team shake hands. Often, during the gold-medal finals of tournaments, the competitors shake hands in the center of the mat during the introduction ceremony.

Sportsmanship has a valuable place in the tradition of wrestling. The handshake is a sign of mutual respect between competitors, something that defines wrestling and those who compete in the sport.

There are numerous life qualities that can be taught through a good, solid handshake. It helps build confidence and a positive outlook. It develops social and leadership skills, such as integrity and respect. It is a part of so many aspects of a person's life.

Jeff Levitz, USA Wrestling's Man of the Year in 2004, places great importance on the handshake and its role in developing young people. Levitz has developed Handshake University as a method to teach kids how to make a great first impression and expand their life skills. He has developed a simple course, which takes only a few minutes but can help a person to improve this basic life skill.

Everybody in wrestling is encouraged to enroll in Handshake University at:  
<http://www.handshakeuniversity.com>

Levitz has been a major leader within wrestling for many years. He was the Team Leader for the 2004 U.S. Olympic Greco-Roman wrestling team. Levitz served as a Co-Chairperson of the "Wrestling for the Next Millennium" capital campaign. He has served with distinction on the USA Wrestling Board of Directors. Levitz has also been a leader with the Gator Wrestling Club, one of the nation's top club programs.

One of the programs where Levitz has made his most important contribution to wrestling is The Levitz Family Scholarship fund, which provides opportunities for hundreds of needy young wrestlers to attend summer wrestling camps each summer.

The program was started in 2003, when 21 athletes, most from his home state of Florida, were provided funds to attend a summer wrestling camp. This past summer was the most ambitious year ever for the Levitz Family Scholarship Fund. USA Wrestling was able to help send 251 athletes from 30 states to summer camp, with \$50,000 spent directly on camp tuition.

Over the four years of this worthy project, a total of 447 young people have been able to go to summer wrestling camp because of the financial support of the Levitz Family Scholarship Fund. The program has provided \$90,000 to pay the tuition costs for the athletes. So many young lives have been impacted by this scholarship program.

For the last two years, every person who receives support through the Levitz Family Scholarship Fund must be a graduate of Handshake University. Each of these young wrestlers

have gone to the website, worked through the assignments and learned another valuable lesson about how to better deal with other people.

Levitetz has had a lifelong passion for wrestling. He competed in high school in Illinois for Steve Combs, who also served many years as USA Wrestling's Executive Director. He was also a member of the Univ. of Alabama wrestling team under coach Pat Milkovich. After leaving the sport as an athlete, he went on to success in business, but remained involved in the sport at many levels. Jeff Levitetz credits the lessons he learned in wrestling for assisting him on his life journey.

Certainly, Levitetz knows a great deal about what it takes to be a success in life. He was a founder and has become the Chairman of the Board of Purity Wholesale Grocers, one of the leaders within the industry. In 2002, the National Wrestling Hall of Fame honored Levitetz with induction as an Outstanding American, which recognizes wrestlers who have become successful in all walks of life.

The quote on the website for Handshake University from Coach Jeff Levitetz is:  
"Whatever you do in life, give it your very best and always be true to yourself."

Take a few minutes, learn something about handshakes and about success, and become a graduate of Handshake University. It is worth your time and effort.