CAN DO!

by Ann Tornberg

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Ann Tornberg is a role model for all small school coaches.

James Copeland

While I was in high school, I began my interest in speech and debate at Beresford High School. At that time, we had an excellent oral interp and theatre program, but no debate. During the summer between my freshman and sophomore year of high school, I attended (at my own expense) a debate camp at Black Hills State University. There, in the summer of 1971, during an intensive two weeks, I first learned about debate. When I came back to Beresford that fall, I was ready to share with my classmates. A small group was formed and we were even given permission to work together on debate in a "luxurious" band practice room on alternating days when we didn't have PE. Thus, I actually started coaching and teaching while I was still in high school! Of course, a "real" teacher accompanied us to tournaments, but we were, in fact, entirely self-coached. What a rare, creative power we were given! The next summer, several of us went off to camp and a full-fledged, competitive team was traveling within the next year. How proud we were to become state champions in those years! My closest friends are still from that group of inspired young advocates.

This is my 23rd year teaching in Beresford, a small school that averages 250 students 9-12. Our NFL Chapter has currently 120 members and degrees. I direct the 1-Act play and our shows have received many "Superior Ratings" at the State Festival. I coach debate, oratory, extemporaneous speaking, oral interp, advise the student council, direct the homecoming variety show, and have directed a wide variety of dramatic productions during my tenure. Unlike most of the schools we compete against all year long with multiple coaches, I run these programs myself.

For a small school, we have a very active speech and debate program. Last year, we had over 70 students that competed in at least one interscholastic speech competition. That's 28% of the Student Body! We're very proud of our participation! In addition, last year, our NFL squad won the District Sweepstakes Award. How reward-

true for kids at all learning levels. The trick, of course, is to find where to start with each individual and keep pushing upward.

My own capsule philosophy of speech education would be the following statement; all students-the so-called normal, the handicapped, and the talented need to work to become adequately adjusted, responsible, and effective communicators and citizens. Even if you give them a very difficult task, as long as you provide them the means to do it and the encouragement they need, they can and will be successful.

(Ann Tornberg's distinguished career has included the 1998 District NFL Sweepstakes, National finalists in American Legion Oratory and FFA Extimp, qualifying 16 students in 21 events at NFL Nationals and coaching 34 South Dakota State Champions. She has been honored as "Outstanding Young Teacher of Speech in 1980 and in 1992 Coach of the Year in South Dakota. In 1996 she was presented the Speech Communication Association of South Dakota's "Distinguished Service Award", its highest honor. She has served three times as Rushmore district chair. Both Ann's daughter's competed in NFL)