***Savannah Youth Football Coach and Parent Handbook***

**As our program continues to grow and involve more area youth, parents and coaches it is our belief that we must always continue to improve the playing experience as well as continue to strive to provide the positive environment necessary for players to be successful.**

**As we have in previous seasons we will be providing coaches and parents with a handbook that will outline not only our program goals and guidelines, but also provide information that we hope will help parents and players have a successful football season. We hope this will be another avenue for us to enable the players, parents and coaches to have input into their youth football program. If you have any questions during the season please don’t hesitate to speak with one of our board members.**

**We will be utilizing our website as a communication tool for players, parents and coaches. Our website is** [**www.savannahsavages.com**](http://www.savannahsavages.com/)**. We will send out updates, schedule changes and season information all year long. You can also find league scores and standings as well. There is also a link to the Midland Empire(MEYFL) website.**

**As we do every season, any funds that are raised for our program through the hard work of our parents in the concession stand or from our tournament are put right back into the complex and into benefits for our players and teams.**

**Just in the last three years we have purchased scoreboards, added an additional parking lot and purchased over 250 new football jersey’s, For last season we were fortunate enough to be able to purchase and install a scoreboard for the lower field and new bleachers have been added.  In addition, we have purchased several pieces of quality practice equipment. We have purchased a Rogers Lev Sled for our 6th thru 8th grade players and a Crowther Blocking Sled for our 3rd thru 5th grade players, and tackling sleds for our players. All of these items are high school / college caliber equipment that is specially designed for players of our age groups. Our players are very fortunate to have access to equipment of this quality and it has been made possible by the hard work of our volunteers and parents. New additions this year are the press boxes.**

**Not only will this seasons reinvestments back into our program give us benefits on the field but off the field as well. Our complex and our program has become a sense of pride for our players, parents and community. As teams travel to other towns to compete and see how fortunate we are here in Savannah it is easy for our players to take pride in our complex and program.**

**Mission Statement**

**It is the mission and purpose of Savannah Youth Football to provide positive athletic opportunities to area youth. We will strive to create and foster a positive learning environment where hard work, team work and discipline are the foundations from which we will build not only our teams, but our entire program.**

**Program Points**

**•We strive to treat our players like they are our sons.**

**•We may require your child to be more disciplined than you do.**

**•Football is a loud, tough, disciplined and emotional game. We coach it with the appropriate intensity that each age level demands. But, it should always be fun.**

**•We believe football is too physical, demanding and intense to be played at a non-competitive level. We prepare each team to the best of its ability, while making every effort to be competitive. We however will not be competitive at the learning and playing experience of the players. It’s important to win, but more important to have playing time and to compete.**

**•The team will always come first.**

**•We ask our players to make a commitment to the team; show up for practice, be unselfish, respect your coach, respect the officials and respect your teammates and opponents.**

**•Schedule meetings with coaches in advance when possible. Our philosophy when evaluating and making a decision regarding a player is what is best for the team first and then the player. We don’t concern ourselves with what is best for the parent. Our doors and minds are always open, yours should be too.**

**Program Structure**

**Contained below is an outline and history of our program. It is important as our program grows that we not lose sight of where we came from and how we got to where we are today as the most respected youth football program in Northwest Missouri.**

**Savannah Youth Football began in 1997 when 23 third and fourth grade young men answered an ad in the Savannah Reporter. At that time we had none of our own equipment and utilized borrowed equipment from St. Joseph. In 1999 we formed our board of directors and partnered with Nodaway Valley Bank to finance the purchase of our own equipment. By that time our program had grown from 23 players to over 60 and now included our first 5th and 6th grade team.**

**We utilized Minnie Cline as our practice fields and typically we would host one or two home games a year at the Middle School. In 2003 our program began our youth field’s project, we are extremely proud of our complex and the opportunities it provides for our program and through everyone’s hard work and help we hope to make continued improvements every season.**

**In 1999 we began our flag football program in hopes of providing a fun and learning environment for the youngest of football fans. In 2003 we began offering 7th and 8th grade football in an effort to provide relief to the burdened Middle School program and are proud to announce that after ten seasons the number of players registered for each program has been consistently high. The high school program over this same time period has a higher turnout for freshman football than the ever before. We believe that is a direct result of player’s having more opportunities to play and participate than ever before.**

**No youth football program in NW Missouri has had as much growth in participation and facilities as we have. Currently our program has over 250 players per season. No other program has made more playoff appearances or won more championships than Savannah since the playoff format began in 1999.**

**Communication**

**With any successful program communication is the key to success, not only between coach and player but with parents as well. We will strive this season to provide parents and players with all of the information that will be necessary in regards to practice schedules, game times and locations.**

**During the season when questions arise from a player’s perspective, we recommend having the player speak with the coach directly to answer their questions or concerns first. This will not only teach the athlete responsibility for their actions and contributions to the team, but will also provide the coach an opportunity to earn the player’s trust and respect by providing open and honest answers to his questions.**

**After speaking with the coach/player if all parties are not satisfied, then a scheduled meeting with the coach, player and parents before practice would be appropriate. Scheduling a time for discussion in advance would be beneficial to all parties. In the event that the issue is not resolved a meeting with the coordinator for that age group would then be necessary, with the grade coordinator communicating back to the board of directors if necessary. It is imperative that we follow this line of communication, so that all parties have an opportunity to solve the issue or concern quickly and efficiently.**

**Coaches, players or parents interrupting practice, criticizing or negatively discussing other players or parents in the presence of players as well as abusive or vulgar language are unacceptable ways to deal with their concerns. Any coach, player or parent whose behavior is in question will be directed to the Board for consideration. Any and all decisions made by the Board of Directors will be final.**

**Discussing playing time, positions, skill level etc….is natural to the youth sports experience and we encourage all involved parties to not only express their questions and concerns but communicate the positives as well. It is imperative that all parties involved understand that we as a program and as coaches want the best for each player. Football is the ultimate team sport, and with that in mind we will place each player in the position we feel is in the best interest of the team. Our history has taught us that we are not placing players in a certain position for life, as players grow and mature they will switch to many different positions before they are done playing football.**

**Our program is part of the Midland Empire Youth Football League, and we supply one board member to their board of directors. The Midland Empire Board of Directors has no authority over our board or program in regards to our rules, disciplinary action or decisions that regard our players, parents, coaches or facilities. These decisions will be made in the best interest of our players and our program as always.**

**Attendance**

**To build a competitive and successful football team an incredible amount of practice and hard work is necessary. Our program has always prided itself on the work ethic of our coaches and teams. We encourage players to attend all scheduled practices and to consistently arrive on time. Players needing to miss practice need to communicate directly with the coach, so that the missed practice will be an excused absence. If a player repeatedly misses practice with unexcused absences, that player’s playing time may be affected at the discretion of the coach.**

**Behavior**

**As with all youth sports experiences it is important that all participants focus on and remember the reasons why we are all here. Football is a passionate sport that is played at a competitive and fast paced level. We’ve all heard the horror stories from youth events across the country. We have been fortunate here that our parents, coaches and players display sportsmanship and professionalism at all times. It is important that we continue that tradition.**

**We encourage our players, coaches and parents to support our teams with as much enthusiasm and energy as they can, while being positive and supportive of all players. Making critical or derogatory comments to officials, opposing players or fans during or after games is not acceptable. Any parent, coach or player that behaves in an unacceptable manner will be disciplined per the guidelines of our program. We will protect the integrity, image and standing of our program at all times. Again, we are looked to by all other programs to set the example of how a great program should not only play the game but also set examples for sportsmanship and enthusiasm.**

**Equipment**

**We provide each player with game jersey’s, helmet, shoulder pads and mouthpiece. Players are responsible for their own practice and game pants, cleats and pad girdles, practice jersey and any special mouth pieces. Each team will inform the parents of their respective players of the color choices for game pants if different than the color of their practice pants. Players are responsible for the condition of their equipment during the season, if repairs are needed please inform your coach so that these can be performed before the next game. We annually have our helmets recertified as well as replace any worn or damaged equipment and we ask for your assistance in caring for your son’s equipment. When washing game jerseys we ask that you do not wash them in a washing machine unless it is absolutely necessary. If machine washing is necessary you will need to turn the jersey inside out and do not utilize fabric softener, this will protect the screened on numbers from peeling and fading. Jerseys should be hung out to dry and not placed in a dryer. We recommend if at all possible washing the jersey in the sink with a mild detergent that does not contain fabric softener.**

**Coaches: You are responsible for making sure that all equipment is in good working order on game day. Make sure you have the proper amount of additional spare parts, mouthpieces and pads. If you need additional parts see your grade coordinator or Derald Lammers.**

**Facilities**

**We utilize the largest and best youth football facility in Northwest Missouri. This facility has been constructed utilizing donations of time and money generated through our football program, and is an ever evolving process. Every season we plan on making further improvements and additions that add to the playing experience for our players and fans. We want a facility that we can all be proud of and ask your help throughout the season in making sure we care for and keep clean the buildings and fields.**

**Coaches: The last team of the day on each field is responsible for the picking up of the trash and debris for that field. Make sure you have designated someone to coordinate this responsibility.**

**Concessions**

**Our largest fundraiser of the season is our concession stand. We ask each team to share in the responsibilities of working in the concessions and have been very fortunate the last few seasons to have had some terrific volunteers to help. Funds raised from the**

**concessions go directly back into the program for field improvements and equipment for the players (see fundraising). Each team during the season will have an opportunity to sign up and work concessions, the teams that work earn bonus dollars with each shift they work for their teams to utilize for their end of the year banquets or trophies.**

**Fundraising**

**Our concessions and tournament provide our largest fundraiser opportunities throughout the season, as well as our annual tournament. In 2005 our program raised enough money to purchase two scoreboards for our fields. Our 2006 tournament raised enough funds through parking and entry fees to allow for the reconditioning and repair of many of our helmets as well as allowed us to purchase over 100 brand new black jerseys to replace the current stock. In 2007  funds were utilized to provide for the additional parking area on the lower level, this was the number one request by parents for the 2007 season. In the last few seasons the program has purchased many new helmets, jersey's and shoulder pads as well as another score board and goal posts for the lower fields all with funds raised from our concession stand and tournament. The 2014 season will see us recrown/reseed the upper main field and the purchase of new helmets and shoulder pads.**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**How often do teams practice?**

**Typically teams will practice four nights a week for two hours until school starts and then typically teams will go to three nights a week. Practice times depend upon the coach but usually run between 6 – 8 pm in the early part of the season.**

**How are teams chosen?**

**During the first week of practice the coaches are evaluating and rating players based upon their skill level and experience. The Varsity coach will assemble his team based upon the players he determines will give him the best opportunity to compete. It is important to remember that regardless of which team a player plays on, the important part is that they have the opportunity to play. There are times when coaches will not choose a player they feel has Varsity level ability if they believe that player will be at the bottom of the depth chart for their particular position and will have limited playing opportunities. Many times the player is better served playing down at the next level to have an opportunity to play more plays and gain more experience.**

**When and where are games played?**

**Games are played on Saturdays and locations vary depending upon the bracket each team is assigned. Teams in our league include St. Joseph, Maryville, Cameron, Maysville, King City, Atchison, Mid Buchanan, Lathrop, Plattsburg and Doniphan County, Kansas. We host many of our games at home. St. Joseph games are played at their complex located on St. Joseph Avenue across from Krug Park and behind the Krug Pool. Teams should arrive at least one hour before each game and always bring both jerseys to be on the safe side.**

**How does the tournament work?**

**We will host our annual tournament the weekend of August 16th and 17th. The tournament is one of our biggest fundraisers with teams coming from Kansas, Iowa, Kansas City, Nebraska and Eastern Missouri. During the regular season there is no admission fee for games, however for the tournament we will**

**charge for admission as it is a non league event and a fundraiser.**

**Does the league or program provide health insurance?**

**No, we do not provide any health insurance coverage for the players who participate in the program. Parents are required to provide their own coverage as outlined in the waiver that each parent is required to sign in order to participate. Any expenses as a result of an injury from participating in the Savannah Youth Football or Midland Empire League are the responsibility of the parents.**

**Can we practice on the baseball fields?**

**No, teams will not be allowed to practice on the baseball fields. This will be the third season that the fields will be available for use and we are asking teams to not practice in the outfield areas. Those fields will have been utilized all summer and will need the fall season to be repaired, seeded and fertilized.**