



JVA CLUB OF THE MONTH FEBRUARY 2013



River City Juniors
Omaha, Nebraska
[Website](#)

River City Juniors was founded in 1987, this is the club's 26th season. RC was founded on the purpose of helping anyone who wanted to play volleyball in eastern Nebraska or western Iowa improve their game. Today that same foundation exists for the club.

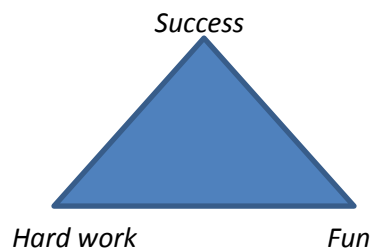
The club views its recent move to JVA as an exciting one. "The JVA just fits better for us, we believe in the same philosophy of volleyball. We love the educational opportunities for both our coaches and players, and how it will allow us, as a club, to become stronger in many aspects," states Club Director Deb Grafentin.

Last year the club celebrated its 25th year as a club by hosting a Birthday Bash during the summer where they invited current and former players to a dinner with a silent auction and raffle. The event was also a fundraiser to help RC raise funds as they are doing a major remodel to the club's facility. The guest speaker was Christy Johnson (Iowa State Head Coach and former River City Jr player). The event was MC'd by Julia Cook, Author of 37 children's books, and mother of a former RC player who currently plays for Kansas State.

River City Juniors have had over 1200 girls in the club over the years. In its first year RC had three teams and Deb coached all three. She quickly learned she needed more coaches. The club has grown to as high as 23 teams, and this season there are 19. RC Juniors won the USAV National Championship in 1995, and were National Runner ups in 2004. This year the club has formed its first boys' team, a 13 and 14 year old team. One of the club's goals is to increase the number of boys playing volleyball in the Omaha area.



Our number one goal at RC is to teach. We believe if we can train the individual to be a better player, we can make the team a better team. The philosophies toward coaching starts with this simple idea... create success! Success can come in many forms. But, to achieve success the Grafentin believes there are two main factors that generate even more success: hard work and fun. If you are working hard at your task you will be successful, if you are having fun and enjoy what you are doing, you will work even harder. There really is much more to this, but in a nutshell it can be quite simple.



There are a few programs at River City that have been a huge success and a lot of fun for the club participants; one is the Big Sis Little Sis program. All of the 15-18 (Big Sis) year old players draw names of the 10-14 (Little Sis) year old players after tryouts are over and they become "sisters". Throughout the season they have several BS-LS nights, where they do not practice, but instead have a "fun" night. One BS-LS night is near Valentine's day and another near St. Patrick's day,

and then one near Easter. Each night has a theme geared toward that holiday, such as St. Patrick's day, where everyone wears green. There are contests and prizes for : Best dressed "sisters", best Green Team (competition amongst all the regular teams), top 5 Greenies (top 5 best dressed). The coaches are the judges. Then they participate in relays and fun games, and end the night playing some sort of volleyball. Throughout the year the players give each other cards or small gifts, and wish them luck in some way before their matches. The Big Sis's have been known to come watch the younger ones on Saturdays and then vice versa for the Little Sis who will come watch the Big Sis on Sundays. Many become quite close as the season progresses. Many of them will go to each other's matches during the school season following the club season.



Another successful program is RC's Specialty Training. This may be different than other clubs in the fact that all of the club's coaches must take part in the specialty training. Each coach will commit to an additional 3 or 4 of the trainings throughout the year. The trainings are divided by both age group and position. It is important to the club that all coaches believe in the same philosophy toward coaching youth players. This does not mean that everyone must have the same style of coaching, but rather teach the same technique so that when a player who moves up an age group and gets a new coach for the next season, she doesn't have to learn something completely different, or put that coach in an awkward situation by saying something like "my coach last season didn't do it like that".



The number of former players who have gone into coaching volleyball after they have left the RC program is a huge testament to the club's impact on its players love of the game. Currently in the metro area of Omaha, there are seven high schools whose Head Varsity Coach is a former RC player (that is 43% of the 16 high schools in the Omaha area). Plus, there are many former players who are currently coaching college, middle school, and other youth teams all around the country.

One of the things both former and current players talk about when they refer to River City Juniors, is how the club is like one big family. Grafentin has always said that she has one of the greatest jobs in the world. "I get to work with people every day, have a positive impact on that individual to make them successful in both volleyball and life, and this is one of the greatest feeling you can ever have. And I get to do this on a daily basis. 😊"



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