



Notes from Nadene Smith

If you knew Jon Smith, you:

- Likely met him in a gym, on the field, golf course, tennis court, or any other sporting venue he frequented
- Laughed a lot because he was very funny
- Felt important because he treated everyone he knew with respect and kindness
- Likely heard all about our daughter, Tucker, and how amazing she is as a person and volleyball player!

Jon, Tucker, and I moved to Abilene, TX, in 2004 so he could create a sports organization, centered around youth. Abilene Youth Sports Authority (AYSA) was birthed with the mission that sports builds character and teaches life lessons. “It’s not important if you win or lose, the real purpose is how well you play the game” was a famous Jon Smith saying.

Volleyball was a growing sport that needed exposure in Abilene, so Jon created the *Volleyball Showcase* event. The large number of games played and the recruitment of players from collegiate coaches was at the heart of the event. Jon would schedule the Showcase at any gym in town to make this and other AYSA sporting events happen consistently. It was evident in the early years of AYSA that a multi-purpose gym was sorely needed to further opportunities for our youth.

Jon was diagnosed with cancer in 2014 and was determined to “not waste his cancer.” This meant he would take advantage of every opportunity to love God, love people, and do everything to the glory of God instead of focusing on his health. He spent a great deal of time leading the charge to fund a local sports complex; championing the cause for over a decade with AYSA.

Jon went to his heavenly home on August 3, 2018. He left an incredible legacy that will be felt in the Big Country for years to come through the Dodge Jones Youth Sports Complex.

And, Jon would want you to know that he was only a part of all the successes of AYSA and the Dodge Jones Youth Sports Complex. It took:

- The vision of Kris Seale
- A loyal staff
- Dedicated AYSA board members
- Committed City Council members
- Countless businesses, foundations, & individual donors
- Persistency, patience, education, and prayer
- Faith of future leaders to take up the mission and continue the work



“Abilene Youth Sports Center exists to build a better game, to play the game better”

Jon Smith, Former Executive Director of AYSA