

Retirement Announcement – Tracy Dudley, Founder & CEO at No Limits Volleyball

At this time, I feel I have fulfilled my purpose in the volleyball world, and it is time for me to move on to other worthy causes. I officially and permanently announce my full retirement as CEO of No Limits Volleyball, effective immediately.

About 10 years ago, I reluctantly volunteered to help get as many people and programs possible into a bankrupt, vacant 6-court volleyball facility in Inverness. At that time, I only had run adult volleyball programs for the fun of it. When I realized that adult leagues would only use a fraction of the available court time, I started renting space to numerous “elite” volleyball clubs and forwarded every penny collected to the landlord.

It very quickly became clear to me that these “elite” clubs were providing volleyball to a very small fraction of the youth population who wanted to play. Because of the obsessive volleyball lover in me, I made it my goal to find a way to include all kids in Colorado currently left out of competitive volleyball. Working firsthand with 8 or 9 clubs in the building, it was obvious that no one else wanted to address this cause. When I determined that a youth “league” was the first step, I was scared to death. I had no idea how to do that, and I did not think I had the wherewithal.

I was wrong. I braved the unknown, and I essentially started the first major youth volleyball league in Colorado—unknowingly destined to be the largest of its kind in the United States. It all started off with a free open house, where I was the only person who knew what the plan was. The line of parents who wanted to talk to me or sign up for this new league went out the door across the parking lot. I stood there for hours speaking to people, as my adult volleyball friends ran the players through drills and formed teams. A lot of what happened after that is a blur because we inadvertently went from about 12 teams that day to 125 teams in a very short period of time. I had to trade my professional career as a successful market researcher for one that paid almost nothing for many years. Why? Because I saw how much I could positively impact thousands of youth and their families in Colorado.

With the help of a lot of friends, I was doing what I love...finding kids who wanted to play good volleyball and getting them on the court. I never cared if they could pay or not, and I gave away more than \$1,000,000 in free volleyball “scholarships” in a few short years. I decided to change the name from South Metro Volleyball to No Limits Volleyball because I refused to limit any child from playing for any reason. I would seek out kids in all parts of town who were not playing but wished they could—and the ridiculous concept of a “virtual” volleyball club spanning the entire metro area was born.

South Metro Volleyball was started as a small LLC as a vehicle for me to rent facilities and offer adult volleyball. As such, all of the tax burden of the organization fell to me personally—taking my household into income brackets where it did not belong. Not only that, I was also funding the “summer” months of South Metro with my personal bank account because that is a long, dry stretch for youth volleyball. Obviously, I could not keep doing this indefinitely, so I accomplished the near impossible and petitioned the IRS to turn “for profit” South Metro Volleyball into No Limits Volleyball, a 501c3 non-profit. This took almost two years, but I made it happen.

The Articles of Incorporation for the “new” non-profit stated very specifically that all employees were to be paid based on a specific biannual document that reported the “average” pay for their respective positions among other non-profits in Colorado. This was the first time my salary grew comparable to what I had earned in the market research industry. Then, when No Limits surpassed the 75-team mark, my pay was raised to that of the average non-profit CEO in Colorado.

About 2 years ago, people who I truly believed were in it for the kids (like me), left No Limits based on unreasonable salary expectations. Their salaries were directly determined by our Articles of Incorporation and the averages for their positions at other Colorado non-profits.

Then, they suddenly demanded to be paid an accumulation of the annual salaries for all of the various jobs that made up their “job description” (for instance, asking to be paid all of the salaries of Director of Operations AND Club Director AND Coaching Director AND Program Coordinator, and more). I was taking the average pay of a CEO at Colorado non-profits, but I was doing the jobs of CEO, CFO, CTO, CIO, VP of Business Development, Director of Marketing, Director of Communications, Webmaster, Accountant, and many more. Each of these positions, on average in the Colorado non-profit industry pay upwards to six figures. I took the pay of CEO only and continued to perform the jobs of about 10 people. If I had added all of the salaries together for the jobs I was doing, I would have been making more than a half a million dollars a year. That is absurd. But, to the naïve who do not have backgrounds in business, apparently that is expected.

With the sudden departure of key staff (giving no notice whatsoever), I was forced to instantly reinvent the management of No Limits in early 2017. Despite my best efforts, I could not come up with any combination of staff who could keep up with the workload associated with a club of 100+ teams. In fact, 2017 was the worst year of my life based on my inability to find people who had the same impossibly lofty goals, high quality standards, and pure dedication to getting kids on the court that I had. Instead, they were about money and finding all the shortcuts possible. After that traumatic experience, I had to reinvent the management of No Limits, again, in 2018! This time, I was not going to stretch myself so thin. I was very tired after 10 years of doing the job of 10 “normal” people as a perfectionist and overachiever, and I was burnt out by excessive damage caused when I failed to “clone” myself the prior year. I needed to dramatically downsize No Limits so that it was more manageable (less than half of the size we had been), whereby my sister and I could run No Limits without employees.

However, the workload remains massive—even with the dramatic downsizing. With her ingenuity, high work ethic, efficiency, resourcefulness, creativity, natural business savvy, focus on quality, and pure common sense, my sister is an amazing and capable person—by far the best I have ever worked with at No Limits. But, neither she nor I can continue sacrificing our entire lives for our jobs. Five years ago, I could have done this alone with only my sister’s help, but today I am tired. I have served my purpose—I set out to provide volleyball to all the kids who currently did not have options...and I crushed that goal. In the process, I permanently changed the face of youth volleyball in Colorado. Other clubs now have their own leagues, and some of them even copy everything No Limits does—attempting to mimic our success. It is time for me to move on to my next worthy cause, where I can start at ground zero again and build something no one imagines is possible. I already have several causes in mind that would positively impact the t community—and beyond. Because of my unheard-of level of passion and ridiculous dedication to excellence, No Limits was far from my first record-setting feat and will be far from my last.

Under my advisement, the No Limits Board of Directors has hired a very capable and accomplished new CEO. He started his own volleyball club the year that I started mine—and for the same reasons. He was committed to providing a new place for elite volleyball players, whereas I was committed to providing a place for all the others. We were both “thrown” into this industry for the kids, without forethought or desire—yet we each committed to weather as much pain and sacrifice as our “causes” would entail. With this letter to the Colorado volleyball community, I am excited to very confidently announce that Erik Rhee from 303 Volleyball Academy is the new CEO of No Limits Volleyball, effective immediately. No Limits will continue to operate as it is, so the shift in leadership should be largely seamless. There are no big changes planned for the remainder of the 2018-19 indoor season.

I’d like to thank everyone who enriched my life by being a part of No Limits over the past 10 years. If you want more information about my exciting, accidental journey from nothing to a gargantuan youth volleyball club, I have started writing a non-fiction, biographical book that goes into much more detail about everyone and everything.