

Former boxer message with athletes

Ray Ciancaglini spoke to the students and staff of Penn Yan Central School District about the need for concussion awareness Oct. 29. The former professional boxer conveyed a cautionary tale for all young student-athletes.

Penn Yan Principal David Pullen said, "I think of Ray as saving minds and saving lives."

Ciancaglini says dealing with the consequences of poor choices made during his youth gives him an opportunity to help the next generation of student-athletes.

"He's been through some difficult times because of his dedication and time to athletics," Pullen continued. "Not understanding concussion management when he was growing up and participating in sports. It's critical now that our students understand the long-term effects that can come with even minor and traumatic brain injuries."

Once a promising young boxer, Ciancaglini's life changed when he failed to seek proper medical treatment for a concussion and reentered the ring. More than four decades after his last professional



Ciancaglini

fight, Ciancaglini suffers from Dementia Pugilistica and Parkinson's Syndrome. He takes medication to cope with its effects.

Initially, Ciancaglini suffered from fatigue as a result of his first concussion. He slept for hours only to wake and still feel tired. Forty years later, he can only sleep for three hours at a time.

Now, he has dedicated his life to mentoring young athletes who may face a similar decision.

Pullen said two Penn Yan students have suffered multiple concussions and must make important decisions for their future well-being.

"(It's the) same symptoms and awareness that

Ray is talking about," Pullen explained when discussing the cases. "Headaches, sleepless nights...they are experiencing the same things. The parents understand now and appreciate the fact that Ray came to speak to them to make them aware because athletics isn't the most important thing in this world or even in their lives."

With the awareness of head injuries on the rise because of the growing concern in the National Football League, Ciancaglini's message is emphatic: "The game you sit (out) today could be the career you save tomorrow."

Ciancaglini's story has been featured on ABC's Good Morning America, and the New York State Athletic Trainer's Association has endorsed him. Ciancaglini, along with New York State Sen. Mike Nozzolio combined their efforts in passing the Concussion Management Awareness Act. The legislation requires coaches, teachers

and other school personnel to be trained on the symptoms of mild traumatic brain injuries and the importance of proper medical treatment.

"A school should be flexible and say we are going to allow extended time to get homework assignments in," Pullen said when discussing the legislation. "I have seen the negative impact that it (a concussion) has on a student's academic performance or their emotional performance. Now, it's evolving into concussion management with some legislation for students who have these brain traumas. Now we're really starting to understand the results of concussions and how they impact students' thinking, their sleep patterns, their response time, everything."

Ciancaglini is the founder of The Second Impact, an organization dedicated to concussion awareness. The foundation has an internet website (www.thesecondimpact.com) where students and families can

read more about Ray's story.

"Ray's message should be in every school," Pullen added. "It's 20 minutes. We offer these opportunities for students and parents to learn which educates parents, students, coaches and administrators. Penn Yan is being very proactive with the concussion tests, the management and getting the information out there. It's a win-win for us."

Ciancaglini and The Second Impact recently organized and presented an Educational Seminar on Concussions at the Belhurst Castle in Geneva.

The evening featured presentations by Dr. Jason Feinberg, Chief Medical Officer of Finger Lakes Health, Dr. Jeff Bazarian of the University of Rochester Medical Center, Jeff Bray of Keuka College athletic trainers' department, and Tom Del Papa of Finger Lakes Health.