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Character will top menu at dinner to support Geneva football

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GENEVA — The Second Impact Foundation is beginning something it hopes will catch on in Geneva.

The organization, founded by former middleweight boxer Ray Ciancaglini, will present Teaching Character Through Football at the Geneva American Legion on Saturday, May 5.

The dinner and discussion will feature several speakers to include Ciancaglini; Geneva head football coach Mike Pane; former Hobart College head football coach and current Senior Associate Director of Athletics Mike Cragg; Statesmen head football coach Kevin DeWall; and Baltimore Ravens Senior Personnel Assistant George Kokins. Each of them will share

his thoughts on how football can build character in a young athlete.

“These coaches are very firm character people and we believe this game teaches great character,” Ciancaglini said. “Most sports do, but football is so disciplined and we feel adamant about it. I think I have a great crew here.”

Ciancaglini logs many a mile talking about concussions, something he knows well given his years as a boxer. It’s a subject he’s passionate about, but so is character. And that’s why he’s starting Teaching Character Through Football.

“The main thing is character. I believe character is the No. 1 thing in life,” Ciancaglini said. “The way you present yourself, the way you are, the golden rule, we’re missing that

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Geneva native Ray Ciancaglini, a former professional boxer and founder of The Second Impact Concussion Education Program, will present the Teaching Character Through Football dinner and discussion next month.

CHARACTER

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I think. And I've been successful at bringing it back to every school I go to."

Not long ago, he turned his focus to sharing positive life lessons with members of the Geneva High School football program.

"That's my job there. I don't know anything about football, but I'm there to talk to the kids," he said. "Through experience. I made every mistake in the book.

"Last year when I came on board we didn't have one player not eligible because of grades," he said. And, according to Ciancaglini, the Panthers only had two unsportsman-like penalties and the players didn't get into any trouble off the field.

"Coach Pane and I, it's all about character," Ciancaglini said. "He drinks the same water I do. He's very strict, doing good in school, zero tolerance.

"Football is one thing and winning is nice,

and he does have a winning program. He's very dedicated, but what are they going to do after? The most gratifying thing that I, and coach Pane, receive is that call after they've gone on, that thank you. It's the most gratifying two words you're going to hear."

Ciancaglini believes in offering the Geneva players incentives for positive results. This past season, Second Impact bought the Panthers pizza if they didn't have any "focus" penalties (offsides, etc.) during a game.

"It's an incentive for doing good," he said, "but if somebody goes offsides they don't get it."

There's good argument for those incentives. Generally speaking, high school football players attract more attention than athletes in other sports and that often puts greater pressure on them to perform at a high level.

It's easy to see why. According to the National Federation of State High School Associations statistics from the 2016-17 school year, football remained the No. 1 participatory sport for boys at the high school level with more than one million participants. Track

and field is second with 600,136 participants, followed by basketball (550,305), baseball (491,790) and soccer (450,234).

"They're just under so much pressure to juggle school work and go through all that grind," Ciancaglini said. "Football is a very tough sport."

The dinner and discussion will be held Saturday, May 5 at the Geneva American Legion. A social hour with appetizers will run from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., followed by a buffet dinner of ziti and meatballs, salad, bread, choice of beverage and dessert. The round table discussion will occur through and after dinner.

There will also be a special memorabilia raffle with all proceeds going to the Geneva football program.

The cost for the dinner is \$25 per ticket. They can be purchased at Rylie J's, Gallagher's Irish Pub and the Geneva High School Athletic Office. You can also contact Brad Roach at (315) 759-0813 or Ciancaglini at the Second Impact Foundation at (315) 719-1031.