

**Abstract**

**CREATIVE PROJECT:** More Than Stripes

**STUDENT:** Rex N. Huffman

**DEGREE:** Master of Arts

**COLLEGE:** College of Communication, Information and Media

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This creative project explored and analyzed the issue of a decreasing number of officials in High school athletics. Scholarly literature review explored during research revealed that the verbal and physical abuse high school officials experience during their career along with low pay and compensation have led to an increase of younger officials leaving the field. Empathy interviews with high school officials revealed that a lack of support from school administrators and athletic directors was also a major issue that needed to be addressed. Through the lens of awareness, this project addressed these issues by developing a toolkit with assets focused on improving sportsmanship and athletic director engagement. Each of the assets can be viewed within the Toolkit Assets file submitted with this project. Content and messaging created for schools to use in external facing social media channels and at the event was tested with stakeholders using surveys. To further extend the use of the toolkit assets, content would be adjusted for schools of different grade levels and the adjustment of the content delivery for travel organizations.

*Keywords:* Athletics, Officiating, Design Thinking, Empathy Interviews