

My name is Jesse J. Aranda and I am honored to share with the friends and family of Ken Dannenbaum my story of the impact that Ken's life had on mine.

My life was pretty basic – as far as where I came from. I was born and raised in Phoenix, Az. and was affected by difficulty in my childhood because of the make-up of my family and the environment that I was raised in. I am the first generation born in this country on my father's side and was raised by my father until I was 14 years old. I was separated from my mother before the age of 3 or shortly after I turned 3. So, I was really in trouble when I was no longer supported by my father and relied on my aging grandmother for my needs as a teenage boy living in the inner-city neighborhood of Carl Hayden High School. Many successful stories come from this community – but I did not know of anyone that wasn't tied to crime or a hard attitude due to the vicious environment that we all were surrounded by. All my friends and family members were struggling and focused on their own survival. I felt that it was the way of the world. I became a high school dropout – a teenage father – a drug and alcohol user – and was angry at the reality of my world.

At the age of 20 - I decided to give up drugs and alcohol and searched for a handball game that I could participate in and focused on playing the best players. I received guidance from a fatherhood program at the age of 25 and over the years was given an opportunity to serve young father's and young families such as myself. At the age of 28 I already knew that I needed to contact these young people sooner and through the blessings of life came into contact with Ken Dannenbaum and the youth handball program.

In January of 2004 - One of the Glendale fire fighters who I had played big ball 3 wall handball with at Glendale High School said that a guy had built some 4-wall handball courts at his house to develop youth handball in Phoenix. It was the Phoenix Youth Handball program. I was given a map by David Villa Lobos and walked in one Saturday morning. Shortly afterwards – Ken and about 9 kids showed up. I was greeted warmly – given the best player of the teenage players to test myself with – and then after I was defeated by Marcello Campa (the Phoenix youth that would battle Luis Moreno in Tucson) Ken sat me down and invited me to be apart of the program. He said – You are just like these kids and you understand them. They understand you. I want you to be a mentor and a chaperone to the kids when we go on the trips to handball tournaments. The kids had just come from the 4-Wall Junior Nationals in December of 2003. There was a handball tournament in Tucson that he already planned to attend with about 16 kids. I was in heaven. I have been blessed ever since and have received numerous blessings of friendships and lifelong lessons of life through the actions of Ken Dannenbaum and his decision to freely support perfect strangers from the Inner City through the sport of Handball.

Ken would always tell the kids – “You are a good man. If there were more people like you in this world – it would be a better world.” He would say that Martin Luther King said “It is always the right time to do the right thing.” He would talk to the kids about acting in a more correct manner when they presented themselves in public and at the handball tournaments. He was always hopeful for the kids to earn the sportsmanship award – or the most improved player at the Nationals or Jr. Nationals – he dreamed about all the kids completing school, staying away from destructive vices like drugs or alcohol – he requested that they always do their best to compete at their highest individual level – he hoped that the kids would earn a college handball scholarship – and with a higher education they could insure a secure future for themselves. He would gather all the kids together and make sure to hand each one in the group \$100.00 so that they would never steal anything from a store or a place that we visited on a

handball trip. He would give all the kids \$100.00 for an A on their report card – he would give \$50.00 for a B. Ken would make deals with kids that did not have any A's or B's and say – bring me your next report card and I will still give you \$100.00 for an A or \$50.00 for a B.

To me – this was all new. I knew of people giving incentives to their own kids. Giving attention to their own family. Spending their wealth on their own desires. And these same people not caring for a second if you felt desperate enough to steal something from a store. Everyone that I knew that seen others without the same benefits that they had – look down on the less fortunate. Ken showed me that a person that had it all, could look at strangers, and care.

I spent as much time as Ken would allow me to spend with him after his business life ended. I would visit him at his apartment – and have breakfast with him at the IHOP or Village Inn on 7th Street. At one of these morning meetings, I admired his gold necklace charm of a handball player and he said “You really like it? Here, I want you to have it.” He gave it to me right then and there. I would call him on his cell and he would always answer me. Even if it was to say that he couldn't talk at the moment.

I am honored and blessed by the choices that Ken made in his life to do something amazing to my life and my kid's lives. There is a picture of me and my 4 kids with all the Phoenix youth handball group attending the 2007 4 Wall Jr. National Handball Championships in Tucson Az. that I will always think of when I remember Ken and the blessings that he gave to me. I will live to honor Ken and all his family because I know that everything that he spent with the handball group – took away from his wife – his kids – his family – and his business. I can never pay Ken back for all that I received, but my plan is to appreciate him for the rest of my life. And do my best to live with all his positivity that he showered on me.

So, to Ken and to all the world I would like to say – I Love You Ken, I Miss You – and I wait for the day to - See You Again..... I want most of all for the peace, and security of LOVE to be with all that have lost friends and family.

Sincerely – Respectfully,

Jesse J. Aranda