

“The ‘everyone is a winner’ era has ushered in increased sales for local trophy shops”

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Monique Naquin is a soccer mom.

Naquin, 42, has spent the last 11 years shuffling one or both of her boys to soccer games, cheering from the sidelines and clapping when they win awards.

And there have been a lot of awards. The Watson resident’s oldest son, Kobe, 15, has been playing since he was 4. Nearly a dozen participation trophies festooned with miniature soccer balls fill the top shelf of a bookcase in his room. Some of the awards have his name engraved on them and others don’t, but most were given to him when he was younger, simply because he participated.

“It’s cool to give trophies out to kids until they’re about 6, because when you’re young getting a trophy boosts confidence,” says Naquin. “But after that and once they start playing competitive, not everyone should get one.”

But that’s not really the case. Nowadays if your name is on the roster, even as old as 12 and 13, you usually get an award just for participating. And the owners of local and national trophy businesses say the “everyone gets a trophy” era has led to increased sales.

“In the last five years we have seen a dramatic increase in trophy sales. Without a doubt, we are seeing an increase in the ‘everyone is a winner’ mentality,” says Jennifer Fontenot, office manager of The Trophy House on Florida Boulevard, a family-owned business. “Instead of just having a first-, second-, and third-place winner, now you have 15 kids who are all getting a trophy just for being on the team.”

Last year, JDS Industries, one of the nation’s largest trophy wholesalers, reported sales of more than \$50 million per year. President Scott Sletten attributes some of that increase to the participation award craze, which began in the late 20th century in an effort to improve children’s self-esteem.

“There are a lot of demographic trends that happened in the mid-80s to 2000s,” Sletten says. “And while there were more leagues and more awards given to recognize a child for sticking with something, another big trend that helped increase sales is female participation in sports.”

Fontenot says she is noticing an increase in trophies among certain sports.

“Soccer has literally swept in here,” she says. “It is now one of our biggest inventory groups. It easily takes over basketball and football.”

While more participation awards are handed out, business owners say trophies only account for a small percentage of sales.

“My business is up, but trophies are a very small part of my business,” says Allyson Thibodeaux, owner of L&S Awards on Perkins Road. “We do way more corporate awards.”

Thibodeaux and Fontenot also say many teams order trophies online—decreasing shop business—because they are buying them in bulk.

“Trophies take up a lot of space and the parts cost a lot of money, so we keep a very low inventory of them here,” says Fontenot. “We make a lot more money in acrylics and plaques.”