
over USA Gymnastics, progress made but problems remain

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MILWAUKEE -- A year into her job as president and CEO of USA Gymnastics, Li Li Leung understands why the focus remains on where the organization continues to fall short.

It lost any benefit of the doubt with the Larry Nassar scandal, when more than 350 girls and young women said they'd been sexually abused by the longtime USA Gymnastics physician, as well as revelations that the organization had buried other reports of abuse. Its continued missteps are taken by critics as proof that even if the people in charge have changed, USA Gymnastics has not.

But Leung insists that progress is being made. That, even with the setbacks, the foundation for a culture that prioritizes the athletes is there.

"I've been really working on transforming our organization, first of all in terms of our mission and vision of where we want to take the company," Lueng said Friday. "We are a service-based organization that exists to serve our membership base and to serve our community.

"We're no longer about developing a technically superior gymnast who performs well in the gym," she added. "We're about developing a holistic athlete who is best set up for success even beyond the sport and beyond the gym."

A former gymnast and longtime NBA executive, Leung was considered perhaps the last, best chance for the raging dumpster fire that was USA Gymnastics when she took over a year ago Sunday. She was the fourth CEO in less than two years. The organization's most prominent athlete, Simone Biles, was also its most vocal critic. Sponsors had fled.

USA Gymnastics also was in bankruptcy, having filed in part to stave off efforts by the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee to strip its status as national governing body.

"I know there was quite a bit of a task ahead of me," Leung said Friday.

shown up just about everywhere U.S. athletes have competed.

Leung has overhauled the executive team, with the chief membership officer now the only carryover from 2016, when the Nassar scandal broke. She's also changed the structure to make it more like a business, and created a position to focus on athlete health and wellness, including life skills and emotional well-being.

"We still have a lot of work to do, but we've made a bit of progress and there's quite many things to be happy about and to celebrate, as well," she said.

Still, the missteps have continued.

The first person hired by Leung, a sports medicine director, lasted all of a day after it was discovered there were abuse complaints against a gym owned by his wife. The hiring had been in the works before Leung arrived, but it raised questions about USA Gymnastics' diligence in vetting.

Six weeks after she was hired, Leung outraged survivors by saying during a "Today" show interview that she'd been treated by Nassar as a teenager but wasn't abused because it had occurred in a public setting with her coach present. Many Nassar survivors have said they were abused in public settings, and several had parents in the room when their abuse occurred.

In the last month, survivors have criticized a settlement offer from USA Gymnastics that would release the USOPC, former CEO Steve Penny and former national team coordinators Bela and Martha Karolyi from civil liability. And two weeks ago, members of the men's team complained that the federation had not been transparent in its selection procedures for upcoming World Cup events, appearing to take assignments away from one team member.

Leung said Friday that the releases were a mandate by insurers, which are funding the \$215 million settlement offer, rather than a choice by the federation. She said she's open to talking with survivors about their requests for more information, and pointed out that USA Gymnastics has cooperated with six independent investigations.

She also acknowledged that USA Gymnastics had erred – badly – in not having detailed



That won't satisfy USA Gymnastics' harshest critics, and Leung gets that. That's part of her job, too.

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