Rutgers Athletics’ Equipment Donation Program

A direct equipment donation program for underprivileged schools and communities is being formed with universities in the area to help fight the rise of youth violence.

Tag Words: Youth Football, Equipment donations, College donation programs

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Summary

After a lot of time and thought, it has come to my attention that football is essential in the developing of our youth. The lessons children learn playing football will be carried and applied throughout their entire lives. It is disheartening to learn that many towns across our country are less fortunate and cannot afford and fund youth football programs. These programs provide our kids with the valuable life lessons that can be taught to them through the game of football. We have decided to organize a foundation where universities across New Jersey will provide and donate equipment to youth programs across the state to help supply these young athletes with the proper gear necessary to complete.
The Issue: Athletics Equipment

As members of the Scarlet Knight football team, we have been privileged with all the necessary equipment needed to succeed on and off of the football field. The football program at Rutgers University has been able to provide their student athletes with proper gear and equipment to perform at an optimum level. Without the advantages of receiving the proper gear our football team would not be able to compete on an elite level. Lucky for the team members, the right gear and equipment is always available when needed.

Unfortunately, for many young athletes growing up in neighboring towns, equipment and gear is not easily accessible. The proper equipment to play a sport, such as football, can be very expensive and many towns just do not have the budget to help support youth football programs. Youth programs can do wonders for a community. Often times, a youth football team can bring an entire town together. The town works together to achieve one common goal in winning a championship. Not only are youth football programs beneficial to the actual town, but for the young athletes taking part in the action. Being a part of such a team helps to keep kids out of trouble. Football can be a way out for many young kids, whether it helps them get into college, goes on to the NFL, or even just to help the young athlete to learn life lessons.

According to NJ.com, “more than one in eight children, 13 percent, were in a family living in poverty in 2008, up from 12 percent the previous year, according to the latest yearly version of the group’s annual statewide report.” These numbers alone prove how impossible it is for a kid growing up in a low-income family to join a sport. Families are struggling to stay afloat and the last of their worries is being able to buy proper sporting equipment. For instance, “when families have to spend a big portion of their earnings on housing, little is left for food, clothing and other essentials.” As much as a family may want to provide for their children sometimes luxuries are just not possible.

Youth violence is a growing problem in the US over past years. Youth violence often starts at a young age and increases into young adulthood. The violence taking place can rang anywhere from bullying, hitting, and even to death. Often times the violence taking place amongst youth offenders can cause much more emotional damage and actual physical damage to the victims. Youth violence alone is the second leading cause of death in the United States among children ages 10 to 24. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Preventions:
* 5,958 young people age 10 to 24 were murdered—an average of 16 each day—in 2006
* Over 631,000 violence-related injuries in young people age 10 to 24 were treated in U.S. emergency rooms in 2007
* In a 2007 nationwide survey, 36% of high school students reported being in a physical fight during the past 12 months
* Nearly 6% of high school students in 2007 reported taking a gun, knife, or club to school in the 30 days before the survey
An estimated 30% of kids between 6th and 10th grade report being involved in bullying. Association with other delinquents and poverty in a community can be major factors in youth violence in any given area. Juveniles accounted for 16% of all violent crime arrests and 26% of all property crime arrests in 2007 (Puzzanchera 2009). In 2007, 1,350 juveniles were arrested for murder, 3,580 for forcible rape, and 57,650 for aggravated assault (Puzzanchera 2009).

The main objective is to nip the problem in the butt and stop the violence before it starts. Many programs have been implemented over the years to help take kids off the street and shift their focus on something other than youth violence. Programs such as youth football organizations have been placed in communities all across the country. Youth football programs give children a place to go and release their anger and get away from their daily hardships. Football teaches discipline and teamwork as well as a sense of authority and respect for their coaches. By having to go to football practice after school a child has far less time to get into trouble. In addition, the young athlete is motivated to keep his grades up in order to stay on the team. When a child is committed and focused in participating in something he loves, such as football, there will be far less youth violence in the streets of America.

One particular youth football organization in Bethlehem Pennsylvania gives a breakdown of the ins and outs of the organization. During an interview with Theodore Street, Commissioner of the Bethlehem Youth Football Organization, many issues and topics regarding the consistency of a youth program were discussed. Within the organization there is a flag group consisting of 5-6 year olds, an 80lb. group consisting of 7-8 year olds, a 95lb. group consisting of 9-10 year olds, a 105 lb. group consisting of 11-12 year olds, and a 135 lb. team consisting of 12-13 year olds. The Flag and 80 lb. groups are non-competitive. With the other weight classes, the child cannot weigh more than 80, 95, 105, or 135 lbs., depending on which team they are on. However, after the first 3 games they are allowed to gain 1 lb. a week. A regular season consists of 8 games. When asked about uniform costs Mr. Street explained how uniform costs vary. Within the flags division uniforms are just a game shirt & pants, flags, belts, protective helmet (boxing style) are roughly $84, with the helmet costing $26, belt & flags ($8), and shirt & pants $50. For the tackle teams, the uniform cost breakdown is as follows: game shirt & pants, roughly $40-50 (depending on quality), helmet ($75), shoulder pads ($26-$32, depending on quality), pad set, consisting of girdle, but, and hip pads ($18). So a full tackle uniform costs approx. $85. All uniforms are recycled from year to year, with fill-in orders being made from time to time, depending on wear and tear of the uniforms.

Within the Bethlehem youth club most organizations do not rent fields, but instead lease them through their municipality. Typically leases start at a small fee ranging from $1. However, most of the time the organization is responsible for field maintenance, building maintenance (repairs to structure, plumbing, heating, etc.), and painting of the field for games. Mr. Street stated at his organization, the City of Bethlehem takes care of cutting the grass and also painting the field. The City has the right to revoke the lease.
at any time based on any violations of the lease.

As far as officials go, the organization takes care of all officiating fees for the tackle teams only. Flags games are just officiated by volunteer parents. The other weight classes are required to have 3 paid officials per game (being 4 games on a game day). Each official gets paid $40 per game on a game day.

For less fortunate kids, The Bethlehem organization does not have scholarship funds, but do have hardship situations. In these cases the program usually just ask the parent or guardian to pay whatever they are able to through fundraising or either through volunteering their time by either working more concession stand hours, volunteering to hold the chains on game days, announce games, help with clean up or set up, or whatever way they can help out. Mr. Street’s organization does not allow any child not to play just based on the fact that they cannot afford it.

Also, there are various fundraisers throughout the season, and families can pay off half of their registration fee through these fundraisers. Bethlehem youth football does raffle tickets, cookie dough/pizza sales, car washes, hoagie sales, ad books, and clothing line (t-shirts, sweatshirts, pants, blankets, etc). Whatever a family doesn't payoff through fundraising; we send them an invoice for their balance due at the end of the season.

Another thing that is beneficial for most organizations is a Board of Directors, which usually consists of an Executive Board (President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary), and then the regular board of directors, which can be any number of individuals that the organization chooses. The Bethlehem board consists of 13 total members. Duties are usually delegated to each Board member, such as Field Coordinator, League Rep, Cheer Coordinator, kitchen/concession stand coordinator, clean up committees, and so on.

Mr. Street indicated that the Bethlehem youth football program has done wonders in the area. Kids seem to be more focused in the community and are more committed to school because any kid who receives below a C average in school cannot participate on game day. Youth violence in the area is still present but has dropped enormously since the youth programs have been implemented.

It is very sad to see so many potential stars fall short of their dreams just because they were not privileged enough to receive the proper gear and equipment to succeed. In attempts to help further the development of youth football programs surrounding Rutgers University, Ryan D’Imperio and Ramy Nubani have found two promising charity events that were formed to provide youth programs with funds necessary to succeed. Ryan and Ramy will each donate several items to the foundations to help spark the interests of potential donors. Both the Washington Township Youth Football charity golf outing and the Ronald McDonald foundation are charity events that keep the best interests of their young athletes in mind. By holding these charity events the foundations will be able to provide equipment at a more accessible price and make the cost of the league more manageable for struggling families. In addition to these donations, a program is being
formed between Rutgers and other potential colleges in the New Jersey area to provide and donate extra equipment to youth programs across the state. Rutgers will provide youth programs across the state with gear such as; thigh pads, kneepads, cleats, chinstraps, gloves, and other general accessories. The program with Rutgers will be a start and hopefully role model for other colleges in the area to follow.

The idea behind the auction and donation is to give back to the community. As members of the Rutgers football team, we have been blessed with more than we need. It is time for young athletes to get the opportunity to succeed. Hopefully by donating to these programs, both the town and the children will receive the benefits. And someday they will grow up and make a dream possible for another young athlete who may not be as privileged.

The Service Project

The primary focus of our service project is to find less fortunate organizations starting in the New Jersey area and working our away across the country to help donate and fund youth football programs. Many youth football programs cannot afford to provide the young athletes with the proper and necessary equipment needed to perform. These youth organizations are so vital in the development of our youth and can make a huge difference in a child’s life. We have contacted several youth football organizations including the Washington Township program along with the Bethlehem organization to set up meetings discussing donations and the details of the donating process. In addition, we have sat down with head equipment manager and director of player services, Mike Kuzniak to discuss the potential of a direct donation program from the Rutgers University football team to youth programs across the state. The hope is once the donation program is finalized to contact other major universities across the country to implement similar programs to benefit the youth football programs in our country. Letters have also been sent out to local newspapers such as, the Star Ledger and Trenton Times to help endorse the potential of our project. After meeting with the necessary people, Lend a Hand for a Boost in Success is making the proper moves to become a reality. In time, youth programs will no longer have to struggle for the necessary gear to provide young athletes with.

References


12. Phone Interview- Theodore Street, Commissioner Bethlehem Youth football Organization

Editorials

To Whom It May Concern:

In an effort to make a difference in the community, I decided to help provide football equipment to underprivileged children in local communities. As a member of the Rutgers Football team, I sometimes take advantage of the equipment provided to me to play the game I love. Many communities across the United States are unable to provide their local children with the opportunity to play youth football strictly due to the cost of the sport. By gathering and donating autographed footballs, game jerseys, sweatshirts, and t-shirts to local youth organizations the proceeds are designated to help fund
equipment purchases for those communities that are less fortunate. In addition, a donation program between major universities and colleges is being organized to directly donate straight to youth programs across the state of New Jersey. Youth programs can help a kid find his purpose in life, keep him out of trouble, and steer him on the right path.

Sincerely,
Jawdat Ramy Nubani

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Editorial:

To Whom It May Concern:

As a football player that started playing at such a young age, I fully understand what it takes to play the sport. One thing that really stands out and also left some of my friends out of playing in the past is the fact that it is a very expensive game. In order to play this game you have to have the appropriate equipment to protect yourself. Since I have gone through this process and now I am at an elite level where there is a lot of extra gear I am taking the opportunity to form a program that can give back to these young children and other youth football organizations. This will give kids the opportunity to have what I had as a young player. In doing so I have received extra gear such as gloves, helmets, jerseys, sweatshirts, cleats, footballs, and hats, and distributed this gear into auctions and donations to raise money. This money is used for kids, to buy them equipment or to be donated to charities. Also with extra gear that I have accumulated over a season that is too big for younger kids, I have donated to my high school to be given to kids that cannot afford it. By starting this program I am looking forward to reaching out to other colleges and requesting their participation to help allow these kids get involved and other organizations to grow more rapidly. I see this as an opportunity to get kids headed in the right direction and also a chance for them to earn a scholarship to a college where they can receive a great education and a great start to life.

Sincerely,

Ryan D’Imperio
April 13, 2010

Ryan D’Imperio
Jawdat Ramy Nubani
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Ryan and Jawdat –

I wanted to thank both you for your help in securing the Coach Schiano autographed football and the collection of Rutgers Football Gear (T-Shirt, Ball Cap, Sweatshirt and Gloves) for our Washington Township Youth Football – 2009 Golf Outing Fund Raiser. While we received many donations from other colleges, Philadelphia, and New Jersey Pro Teams, and local businesses – the two Rutgers items were among the most popular Chinese Auction items.

In total we raised over $6,500 for our organization – that total, more than doubled the amount of prior years.

This money was used to offset the cost of referees, field maintenance, and equipment. In keeping with our stated mission to support others less fortunate than ourselves - a significant portion of these funds were allocated to our Charity Account. From this account Washington Township Youth Football makes donations to children and families in need.

I enjoyed hearing your thoughts about starting a program where Rutgers would donate equipment and football gear, as raffle gifts, to New Jersey area youth programs. I am certain that you will not lack for groups needing your support. I would be willing to provide any help that you may need with this program. In fact, I can think of a few teams in the South Jersey Elite Football League and other leagues that could use your help.
Again Thank You very much for your support. This year’s Golf Outing is July 23rd at the Pitman Golf Club; if your schedules permit, we would love to have you there.

Sincerely –

Bob Schleicher

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Jawdat Ramy and Ryan D’Imperio,

Our meeting on Friday April 2, 2010 regarding a donation program between the Rutgers University Player Services Department and youth football programs across the state sounds like a very promising service project. The ideas that were presented were well thought out and extremely feasible. The program may take several months to start up but in the end has the potential to be a huge success. As we discussed there are many different pieces of equipment that can be donated including; thigh pads, knee pads, tailbone pads, griddles, elbow pads, cleats, gloves, and other accessories. I look forward to the advancement of this service project and if there is anything else that I can help with please do not hesitate to contact me.

Mike Kuzniak

Rutgers University Football
Director of Player Services