

Sports philanthropy: NFL Athletes Give Back

By Autumn Burton, Ph..D

The trend of increased sports philanthropy has been seen in the creation of professional athlete foundations across the United States. Many professional athletes from the National Football League (NFL), National Basketball Association (NBA), and the National Baseball League (NBL), to name a few, have started their own nonprofit organizations. Many of the player foundations focus on youth and sports, but many of them also focus on promoting awareness or curing a specific disease. Additionally, personal stories can be extremely powerful tools when it comes to change. If people can learn from personal stories then there is a better chance to make a pivotal change.

As seen on many current network programs, high-profile celebrities are being used more each day to get the message of many nonprofit organizations out to the community. There have been many athletes and entertainers lending their face and voice to efforts like "Idol gives back" and "Aids-Red" campaign. What is the motivation for those celebrities? Are they directly impacted by the message of the campaign? Could it be a career move for exposure? Is it a historical link? Is altruism or egoism a characteristic of human nature or is it learned from others? These types of questions are the focus of theories of giving.

For almost as long as professional sports have been in existence, there has been a strong connection between athletes and the community. The huge popularity of sport puts athletes in a national spotlight. These sports professionals are viewed as role models by many people. Whether it is a personal experience of their own, a global or local catastrophe, or out of the goodness of their hearts, athletes lend their support to nonprofit organizations to help people who are not as fortunate as the sports professionals that have the million dollar contracts.

There seems to be a growing desire for athletes to make a difference in the community as seen by the increase in foundations on the NFL Players Association Website. You can also see an emerging growth in sports philanthropy as seen by new organizations like Athletes for Hope and the Sports Philanthropy Project. There have been many nonprofit organizations that leverage the influence of high-profile people to gain more awareness for their mission and to help develop successful campaigns, like the American Diabetes Association who selected Donovan McNabb (NFL Quarterback) as their spokesperson.

Nonprofit organizations rely on donations and support from people who are passionate about their cause to close the funding gaps. There are many nonprofit organizations in the United States and an unknown number of nonprofit organizations formed by professional football players. One of the goals that the NFL stresses to each player in the league is to get involved with community initiatives. With the national spotlight focused on players on and off the field of

T2T MAGAZINE SALUTES NFL FOUNDATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS



49er's Academy Since opening in 1996, the 49ers Academy in East Palo Alto has received a steady stream of support from the entire 49ers organization. The school serves 6th, 7th and 8th grade students who benefit from a small, nurturing and personalized environment. The 49ers Academy provides a caring community where the emphasis is on one-on-one relationships to promote academic success in children who have struggled in other school programs. www.49ers-academy.org.



51 Ways for Charity, Inc. Founded in 2005 by Carlos Emmons of the NY Giants and Takeo Spikes of the Buffalo Bills, the Foundation's mission is to support families of children that have been diagnosed with cancer and/or blood disorders through financial, spiritual and physical resources (gifts, time, etc.).

The Ray Lewis Foundation is a non-profit tax-exempt corporation whose mission is to provide personal and economic assistance to disadvantaged youth. Ray has built a strong reputation on and off the field as a leader who cares enough to get things done. Since Ray first arrived in the Baltimore area, he has been a community staple when it pertains to helping the youth of our city. Most of the charities Ray chooses to partake in, he does without any fanfare. The Ray Lewis Foundation is committed to enhancing the lives of today's at risk youth. www.raylewis52.com/foundation.htm.



The Mewelde Moore Knowledge First Foundation was created by Pittsburgh Steelers running back, Mewelde Moore to positively impact young men between the ages of 10-18. The Foundation will launch programs that will offer incentives for students in order to encourage high scholastic achievement. [http://](http://www.mmkff.org)

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The Kurt Warner First Things First Foundation is dedicated to impacting lives by promoting Christian values, sharing experiences and providing opportunities to encourage everyone that all things are possible when people seek to put 'first things first.' www.firstthingsfirstfoundation.com.

These are only a few of many charitable NFL organizations that supports countless communities and people around the nation. To learn more about these charities, visit their respective websites. Also visit www.athletesforcharity.com and other professional athlete charity websites.