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http://houston.astros.mlb.com/hou/community/outreach.jsp

* Astros Play Green

The Houston Astros and Devon Energy rewarded Ms. Jolanta Stern's fourth grade students for their environmentally friendly efforts with a special visit on September 21. Astros starting pitcher **Dallas Keuchel** and broadcaster **Dave Raymond** took a trip to Browning Elementary School as part of the Astros Play Green® program. Keuchel read *Miss Fox's Class Goes Green* and each student received their own autographed copy of the book. After the reading, students asked questions about Dallas' life as a Major League Baseball player and then they planted trees with the southpaw. The tree planting was a collective effort as Dallas, Dave, the students, Astros interns and Trees for Houston employees pitched in to help.

During the fourth annual Astros Adopt-A-Firehouse program, Astros players "adopted" the firehouse that corresponded with their uniform number. **Brian Bogusevic, Justin Maxwell** and **Chris Snyder** along with Astros great, **Jose Cruz** signed autographs and presented framed, autographed jerseys to firefighters as a thank you for their service. Chick-fil-A provided lunch at each firehouse. Established in 2009, Astros players have now "adopted" 23 total fire stations through the Adopt-A-Firehouse program.

Wesley’s Change-Up

Astros reliever **Wesley Wright** sponsored Wesley's Change-up treating teens from CROSSROADS: Community Partnership for Youth, Inc. to special Astros experiences this summer. The 2012 program ended on August 28. The 20 attendees received a game ticket, $15 towards ballpark purchases, and they met Wesley after watching batting practice from the field. CROSSROADS' mission is to prevent or reduce youth involvement with the juvenile justice system by fostering positive mentoring relationships between youth and volunteers in the Houston area.

**HOME SWEET HOME**

Each Sunday home game, the Astros host the Home Sweet Home program sponsored by Budweiser. A small group of active duty military personnel who have recently returned from overseas service take part in a special Astros experience that includes a player meet and greet. The group watches the game from a suite, catered with complimentary food and beverages, and they are introduced prior to the seventh inning singing of "God Bless America." The Astros welcomed U.S. Air Force and Army members on August 19 and the group met **Tyler Greene**, **Mickey Storey**, **Kyle Weiland** and **Wesley Wright**.

**TAKE A LEGEND TO SCHOOL**

On September 24, Astros legend **Craig Biggio** attended Westbrook Intermediate School as the special guest of seventh-grader Ryleigh Love. Ryleigh was the winner of the Astros and Whataburger's "Take A Legend To School" program. Over the summer, fans participated in an online essay contest that explained why their nominated student was the most deserving of special recognition. More than 500 entries were received on behalf of elementary and intermediate school students from parents, relatives and friends. Junction Jack, the Astros mascot, escorted Ryleigh to school in a limousine. Biggio joined Ryleigh at Westbrook Intermediate for lunch and a meet and greet session with Ryleigh's classmates. That evening, Ryleigh threw out a ceremonial first pitch and enjoyed the Astros-Cardinals game from a suite.

**ON THE HOME FRONT**

With the help of USO Houston, the Astros welcomed several military families with loved ones serving away from home to batting practice on September 21. The participants received tickets to the game, each preloaded with $15 for ballpark concession and retail purchases.

**JEDI WARRIORS**

Astros shortstop **Jed Lowrie** and his wife Milessa sponsored Jedi Warriors, a program supporting wounded soldiers. One Friday a month, Lowrie hosted a group of former military members from the Wounded Warrior Project. On September 14, 20 attendees received a ticket to the game, $20 towards ballpark purchases and they met Jed after watching batting practice from the field.

**TEAM 20**

This summer, Astros starting pitcher **Bud Norris** sponsored Team 20, a program that provides an upbeat Astros experience for pediatric cancer patients. Norris worked with Candlelighters, an organization that provides emotional, educational and practical support to children with cancer and their families. On August 31, each of the 20 attendees received a ticket to the game and $15 towards ballpark purchases. After watching batting practice, they met Bud and had the opportunity to get autographs.

On August 16, the Astros wives hosted the 23rd Annual Black Ties and Baseball Caps Gala. The event raised **$450,000** for the Houston Area Women's Center.

**SUNSHINE KIDS MEET AND GREET**

The Astros and the Sunshine Kids have worked together for many years to provide unique baseball experiences for children with cancer. Several times each season, Sunshine Kids families visit the ballpark for a pregame meeting with Astros players.

**ASTROS BUDDIES Q&A PRESS CONFERENCE**

The Astros Buddies Kids Club is the team's official fan club for kids 14 and under. Members receive exclusive benefits including tickets, cool Buddies merchandise, Astros trinkets, and invitations to member-exclusive events. Kids experience Astros baseball the "Buddies way."

On August 10, MVP Buddies members participated in the first-ever Astros Buddies Kids Q & A Press Conference. Astros broadcaster and former player **Jim Deshaies** emceed as kids asked pitcher **Lucas Harrell**, outfielder **Justin Maxwell** and catcher **Chris Snyder** questions about their everyday lives as Major League Baseball players.

**PLAY CLINIC**

PLAY - which stands for Promoting a Lifetime of Activity for Youth - is a public awareness campaign developed by the Professional Baseball Athletic Trainers Society (PBATS) to combat child obesity. On July 25 at Minute Maid Park, Astros trainers **Nate Lucero** and **Rex Jones** led 60 children from the Astros Urban Youth Academy through a series of four stations that addressed being active through proper athletic training, sustaining healthy lifestyles and the dangers of performance enhancing drugs. Outfielder **J.D. Martinez** and reliever **Wesley Wright** talked about their routines and reinforced healthy living. The clinic was followed by a healthy lunch in the FiveSeven Grille.

**GRAND SLAM FOR YOUTH BASEBALL SCHOLARSHIPS**

The Grand Slam for Youth Baseball program awarded and recognized 25 Houston area scholarship recipients during an on-field, pregame ceremony on June 23. Through this program, Minute Maid and the Astros In Action Foundation annually fund and support individual $2,500 college scholarships that assist high school senior boys and girls with college expenses.

**BORN TO WYNN**

Excellence, diligence and teamwork are all skills learned through sports and are also fundamental building blocks for success. For the second summer in a row, the Astros conducted the Born to Wynn program at the Astros Urban Youth Academy (UYA).

The program's simple tag line, *Believe it. Own it. Walk into it.*, encourages and empowers youth players to believe in themselves and use key life skills on and off the field to succeed.

By tapping into the Major League Baseball experiences of **Jimmy Wynn** and other current and former Astros players, Born to Wynn focuses on developing leadership and life skills. The lessons emphasize key leadership qualities - character, attitude, skills, knowledge, drive and excellence.

Sessions took place each Monday in June in conjunction with the Academy's four-week summer camp with **Jimmy Wynn**, **Justin Maxwell** and **Wesley Wright** providing baseball instruction and sharing life lessons.

**ASTROS-BASEBALL TOMORROW FUND EQUIPMENT DRIVE**

The Baseball Tomorrow Fund (BTF) is a joint Major League Baseball and Major League Baseball Players Association initiative designed to promote the growth of youth baseball and softball. Each season, clubs across the league team up with the Baseball Tomorrow Fund (BTF) to collect much needed equipment for local youth baseball and softball programs in their cities.

The Houston Astros teamed up with BTF and Academy Sports + Outdoors to host an equipment collection drive at the Astros-Rangers game on May 20. Academy Sports + Outdoors pitched in over 200 new baseball gloves.

Volunteers collected new and gently-used gloves, bats, tees, helmets, baseballs and softballs from fans at Minute Maid Park entrance gates. The Astros' 2012 efforts tallied over 700 items which will benefit the Houston Parks and Recreation Department's, or HPARD's, free baseball and softball programs.

In addition to the items collected, HPARD received a $5,000 grant from the BTF to purchase new equipment. The grant was given in the name of Astros outfielder **J.D. Martinez** for his commitment to youth baseball and softball during the Astros' pregame ceremony that day.

**FIELDING THE PLAY IN LIFE**

Just as fielders on a baseball diamond have a choice in executing a play, kids are also faced with their own challenges every day. On May 7, Astros players **David Carpenter**, **Jed Lowrie**, **Fernando Rodriguez**, and **Chris Snyder** and broadcasters **Jim Deshaies**, **Brett Dolan**, **Dave Raymond** and **Francisco Romero** visited four local schools and presented the Astros Whataburger Fielder's Choice school assembly.

This season is the sixth year that Whataburger has teamed up with the Astros to present the Fielder's Choice Program. The assembly-style program is based on baseball's fielder's choice play defined as the act of a fielder who handles a fair grounder and instead of throwing to first base to put out the batter, throws to another base in an attempt to put out a preceding runner.

This spring, area schools were invited to participate by submitting student essays discussing the topic of making good choices. The Astros received almost 2,000 essays from 25 schools. Four students were selected as winners. The 2012 Fielder's Choice winners were seventh-grader **Asya B.** (Holub Middle School - Alief ISD); sixth-grader **Eve B.** (Escamilla Intermediate School- Aldine ISD); second-grader **Jennivie B**. (Parker Elementary School - Houston ISD) and fourth-grader **Julianna Z**. (Lawhon Elementary School - Pearland ISD).

In addition to the player visit, the four winning students were recognized in an on-field, ceremony before the Astros vs. Marlins game. Students attending the school assemblies also received a special certificate of participation and coupon from Whataburger.

**HOMETOWN HERO**

Each month, the Astros In Action Foundation, in partnership with Wells Fargo, honors an area citizen with the title of Hometown Hero. Those recognized have gone above and beyond and performed extraordinary acts within their communities. Prior to the Astros-Marlins game on May 9, the Astros honored six-year old Rafe Nobles Kotalik as the May Hometown Hero.

The young Tiger Cub Scout from Pack 777 of the Tall Timbers District is doing extraordinary things. Rafe has earned more than 50 awards this year, including the Cub Scout Good Turn Award, Citizenship honors, the Tiger Super Achiever Award and is a Gold level recipient of the Presidential Volunteer Service Award.

In 2008, Rafe became the youth ambassador for children's book drives benefiting Houston area children's hospitals and began collecting and delivering school supplies and toys for local abused and neglected children. Since 2009, he has served as team captain for bounce events to benefit kids with autism. Additionally, he has sent more than 5,000 care packages to military personnel stationed in war regions. This past January, he enlisted the help of his friends with these efforts and mobilized a charity group at his school that collected more than one ton of food in one week for a local pantry. The drive also gathered more than 1,500 books for Texas Children's Hospital in honor of Rafe's friend with Batten disease.

**ON THE HOME FRONT**

Launched last season, the Astros are pleased to be hosting On The Home Front again in 2012. With the help of USO Houston, the Astros welcomed several military families with a loved one serving away from home to a special Astros experience that included an on-field batting practice visit and tickets to the Astros-Rockies game on April 6. The program happens one Friday a month. Each participant's ticket is loaded with $15 that can be spent at most concession and retail stands at Minute Maid Park. Information about all the Astros military efforts is available at

**FANFEST**

FanFest returned to Minute Maid Park on February 11, allowing fans to enjoy all things Astros. Many popular activities were back including autograph sessions, the garage sale and mystery grab bags along with new experiences, such as kids inflatable games on the field and the opportunity to take batting practice. Fans were also able to paint or sign their name to the Astros 50th Anniversary mural, which will be displayed in the ballpark throughout the 2012 season.

This year's festival included several current and former Astros player autograph sessions. Current players participating were **Brian Bogusevic**, **Jason Bourgeois**, **Jason Castro**, **Chris Johnson**, **J.D. Martinez**, **Bud Norris**, **Humberto Quintero**, and **Brett Wallace** along with newcomers **Jed Lowrie** and **Chris Snyder**. Manager **Brad Mills** met with fans as well. The former player group included **Kevin Bass**, **Enos Cabell**, **Jose Cruz**, **Larry Dierker**, **Bob Watson**, **Jimmy Wynn**, **Shane Reynolds** and **J.R. Richard**.

"Talkin' Baseball" sessions, which took place in Union Station, gave fans the opportunity to hear from Astros General Manager **Jeff Luhnow** and President and CEO **George Postolos**. Other session topics, "2012 Season", "Astros.com Chat Session", "50th Anniversary Plans", "A Look at 50 Years" presented a season outlook, while "Story Time with Milo Hamilton" and "Talkin' Youth Baseball" provided entertainment for kids.

FanFest proceeds benefited the Astros Urban Youth Academy.

**CAREAVAN**

The 2012 Houston Astros CAREavan made 47 stops in 13 cities over eight days, traveling more than 3,500 miles. From **February 1-10**, over 35 Astros players, alumni, coaches and front office staff participated in CAREavan reaching thousands of fans. Highlights included conducting several youth baseball clinics, visiting with military and pediatric patients at hospitals and serving fans lunch at Chick-fil-A and signing autographs at Academy Sports + Outdoors stores.