The MIAA extends its sincere appreciation to the Massachusetts Army National Guard for their support of the 11th Annual Student Sportsmanship Essay/Multimedia Contest.

The Massachusetts Army National Guard promotes the values of Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity and Personal Courage to make a difference in the community.

Several of these values are referenced throughout the essays in this book.

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

A collection of recognized essays from the 11th Annual MIAA Student Sportsmanship Essay/Multimedia Contest
“How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?”

This book represents the finalist and honorable mention entries in the 11th Annual MIAA Student Sportsmanship Essay/Multimedia Contest as voted by the MIAA Sportsmanship Committee.

First Place
Drew Belcher, Katie Clements, Melissa DalPozzo
Olivia Gallugi, Nick Guenard, Olivia Healey and Morgan O’Brien
-Reading Memorial High School-
(VIDEO ENTRY – To watch this video, please go to www.miaa.net)

Second Place
Remy Pontes – Arlington High School

Third Place
Taylor Farris – Andover High School

Essay Finalists
Michael Angello – Bishop Feehan High School
Kris Tardy – Holyoke High School
Ryan Conte – Somerville High School
Hannah Woodworth – Lowell High School
Sahana Nazeer – Bishop Feehan High School
Jacque Rodriguez – Narragansett Reg. High School
Alessandra Zaffanella – Lenox Mem. Mid/High School

Alex Nuby – Whitman-Hanson Regional High School
Ryan Hileman – Pentucket Regional High School
Carley Benoit – Mahar Regional School
Allison Kurpiel – Lynn Classical High School
Hannah Taylor – Sturgis Charter School
Dana Jacobs – Martha’s Vineyard Reg. High School
Evan Ryan – Norton High School

Multimedia Finalists
(VIDEO ENTRIES – To watch these videos, please go to www.miaa.net)

Thomas Harkey, Steven Sack and Derek Thisse
-Millis High School-

Ralf Ayala, Cathie Iglesias, Monica Iglesias, Andrew Isner, Oksana Kontsemal, Shannon Michaels, Catherine Oleksak, Bryan Robles, Amber Rode and Brandi Vangelder
-Westfield Vocational/Technical High School-

Andrew Errico, Owen Hilton, Tommy McAullife, Chris Sanborn, Ethan Vara, Brian Walsh and Colin Walsh
-Millis High School-

Alyson Fazio
-Andover High School-

Courtney Yost
-Silver Lake Regional High School-

Liz Leonard
-Greenfield High School-

Jenna Berthiaume, Emily Diniz, Brianna Geppner, Lindsey Macedo, Lucas Machamer, Jon Melchert, Pat Monohan, Meagan Pacheco, Mike Raposo, Ali Ryan, Abbey Sadlers, Lauren Silvia and Tayler Travis
-Somerset Berkley Regional High School-

Multimedia Honorable Mention
(VIDEO ENTRIES – To watch these videos, please go to www.miaa.net)

Boys Varsity Soccer Team
-West Springfield High School-

Matt Kravitsky, Jake Rubin and Kyle Ruboy
-Sharon High School-

Girls Cross Country Team
-Doherty Memorial High School-

Andrew Almeida and Antonio DePasquale
-Winthrop High School-
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title/Author/School</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Athletes and the Community (SECOND PLACE)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remy Pontes – Arlington High School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Warrior Way (THIRD PLACE)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor Farris – Andover High School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Athletes Can Make a Difference (FINALIST)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Agnello – Bishop Feehan High School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Athletes Making a Difference (FINALIST)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kris Tardy – Holyoke High School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get Involved (FINALIST)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan Conte – Somerville High School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a Difference On and Off the Court (FINALIST)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah Woodworth – Lowell High School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multifaceted Mortals (FINALIST)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sahana Nazeer – Bishop Feehan High School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community? (FINALIST)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacque Rodriguez – Narragansett Regional High School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cycle of Giving Back (FINALIST)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alessandra Zaffanella – Lenox Memorial Middle and High School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panthers Basketball Means It! (FINALIST)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex Nuby – Whitman-Hanson Regional High School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service &amp; Sports (FINALIST)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan Hileman – Pentucket Regional High School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community? (FINALIST)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carley Benoit – Mahar Regional School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community? (FINALIST)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allison Kurpiel – Lynn Classical High School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Than an Athlete (FINALIST)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah Taylor – Sturges Charter School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterparts in a Whole (FINALIST)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dana Jacobs – Martha’s Vineyard Regional High School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Student-Athletes Can Make a Difference in Our Community (FINALIST)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan Ryan – Norton High School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Athletes Making a Difference</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Tobin – Woburn Memorial High School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chidera Onyeoziri – Brockton High School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas LeBlanc – Clinton High School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyra Pellant – Notre Dame Academy (Hingham)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Art of Giving
Joey Colbert – Plymouth South High School

MIAA Sportsmanship Essay
Abby Ratery – Dover-Sherborn High School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Sean O’Connor – Mount Greylock Regional High School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Georgina Dominique – Boston Latin Academy

The Role of Student Athletes Within our Community
Mitchel Francois – Green Academy

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Michelle Whyte – Blackstone-Millville Regional High School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Michael Brooks – Everett High School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Julianne McShane – Notre Dame Academy (Hingham)

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Alex Coucci – Dartmouth High School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Katherine Muise – Saint Mary’s High School (Lynn)

Student Athletes Can Make a Difference in the Community
Brian Miles – West Springfield High School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Naomi Bledsoe – Greenfield High School

The Jerry Fund
Miles Briggs – Lenox Memorial Middle and High School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Kaitlyn Vasile – Blue Hills Regional Technical School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Kelvin Severino – Lawrence High School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Allison LeBel – Holliston High School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Brendan Fitzgerald – Blackstone-Millville Regional High School

Panthers Can
Karen Dempsey – Whitman-Hanson Regional High School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Delaney McWalters – Millbury Memorial Jr/Sr High School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Peter Le – Bishop Connolly High School

Making a Difference in the Community
Tamara Kuzmenko – Chicopee High School

Student-Athletes Making a Difference in Their Community
Jacob Elkins – Holyoke High School
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community? 47
Katherine Lynch – Norwood Senior High School

Sarah Smiles 48
Erin Baronas – Billerica Memorial High School

Student-Athlete Influence on Community 49
Jessica Scozzari – Mashpee High School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community? 50
Jake Mountain – West Springfield High School

Can Everyone Be a Team Player AND Help Out in the Community 51
Kaitlyn Boehm – Saint Joseph Central High School

Sharing Ideas as a Team 52
Rooby Fortulien – Community Academy of Science and Health

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community? 53
Rachel Grabar – Wilmington High School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community? 54
Jumana Dahleh – Lexington High School

So We Play 55
Caroline Harrington – Wellesley High School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community? 56
Madison Herel – Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community? 57
Tava Hoag – Clinton High School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community? 58
Meghan McCarthy – Saint Mary’s High School (Lynn)

Win, Win, Win 59
Rachel Silk – Lowell High School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community? 60
Kayla Mangan – Everett High School

Student Athletes and Their Communities 61
Maggie Johnson – Martha’s Vineyard Regional High School

Student Athletes in the Community 62
Jake Dacosta – Dartmouth High School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community? 63
Shawn MacNeill – Uxbridge High School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community? 64
Betsy Maysonet – Madison Park Technical/Vocational High School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community? 65
Caitlin Murray – Attleboro High School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community? 66
Bryana Ingersoll – Greater Lowell Technical High School

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community? 67
Brooke Jameson – Bedford High School

Acknowledgments 68
***SECOND PLACE***

Student Athletes and the Community

Remy Pontes

Arlington High School

As a student athlete on the Varsity Hockey and Baseball teams in my junior year at Arlington High School, I have received tremendous support from my family, school, coaches, and town to achieve my goals in athletics and academics. I have always appreciated the compelling opportunities to succeed and to reveal the potential within each student that my community offers. Yet these opportunities are not just something one should expect from those around you, but also something one should return. It is a privilege to play for your school, and must be treated as such. Wearing the name on the front of a jersey means accepting a certain level of responsibility, acquiring leadership skills, and using those skills with integrity, particularly when challenges arise.

As an athlete, you are considered a role model, by younger children looking for inspiration in their own sport, or by anyone who needs to see that good values and virtues still exist and a healthy balance between athletics and academics can be achieved. Sometimes athletes are perceived as so self-absorbed in their pursuit of a competitive edge that they are oblivious to the need to give back to the community, even though so much is given to them. But athletes can contribute not only by scoring the winning goal in sudden-death overtime, but by considering their status as a role model seriously, by persuading even one student to reject the use of drugs and alcohol and pursue good grades. The poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote, “I slept and dreamed that life was a joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy.” In serving as an example, a student athlete can have a positive effect on their community.

This past hockey season, our team visited the Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital. We stopped by dozens of rooms, the cafeteria, and lounges and handed out holiday gifts while taking time to listen to and learn from these heroes who had served our country and made opportunities available for others. It was enlightening and inspiring to see the pleasure that these few hours of interaction brought them. Even the facility staff seemed energized by our visit. That same week, we also visited the Park Avenue nursing home, giving out candy and singing carols to the residents. The choices one individual makes may alter a community entirely. There are no specific boundaries of a community; it can be defined as “groups of associated individuals leading a common life”, whether on a global scale, specific to a neighborhood, or anything in between. Our role in that week is just a small example of how even a few hours of service can affect others in a positive way. A goal to strive for is that those contributions made by student athletes will create a ripple effect reaching out to those most in need. In considering the future, these positive influences will hopefully extend beyond our high school years.
One would think Tom Brady just walked into the High Plain Elementary school. The second grade classroom bursts with excitement, the seven year old’s eyes brighten and smiles shine over their faces. It is a sophomore varsity baseball player and I. We walk in and they all sit on the edge of their seat. They study each step we take, notice the texture of the shirt we wear, and how we do our hair, dying to copy every choice we make. We have not even said two words but we have become heroes in the three steps we have taken into the classroom. This is what I am doing in my community to make a difference, I am a part of the Warrior Way and I love every minute of it.

Three years ago our Warrior Way program was created. Varsity Athletes were selected-based on their academics, character and sportsmanship- they were trained and sent to the elementary and middle schools in town with a mission. The mission is to promote sportsmanship throughout the entire community. Not only do the young kids look up to the Athletes as role models but the Athletes realize how much of an influence their actions have on the younger kids; working even harder to never let their new fans down.

I was asked to join my sophomore year, which was the start of the program; I was representing Varsity Field Hockey and Varsity Softball. My first mission was to South Elementary (one of the five elementary schools in Andover). I was given a guide to go by and was paired with another boy athlete. The 2nd graders were hanging on every word I said. We discussed the three pillars of the warrior way, and how to show sportsmanship in all aspects of life. It is not just what you do on the field but what you do off the field. Every kid was dying to tell us their stories, how they helped their friend who fell or how they scored the winning goal. We asked what types of sports they played, teams they were on, from soccer to math team every answered was called out. They sat in awe as we talked about what it meant to be a captain, and how everyone on a team has a place. We told them how we have failed in the past and to never give up. The questions were never ending. We stayed the rest of the day; helped with math, read their writing, and went to recess. Looking out at recess I saw other member of Andover High, from cheerleaders to hockey players they all were scattered playing hopscotch and tag with kids half their size. Everyone had a smile on their face. When I got home that day I got a call from my neighbor, she had a daughter in second grade who came home and could not stop saying how she could not wait to be a warrior.
“Student athlete” is a phrase commonly used in today’s society. We see this phrase in newspapers and on television, but we often do not value the power possessed by a student athlete. Student athletes make contributions in the classroom, on the playing field, and more importantly, in the community. The status held by a student athlete can help make positive contributions to the surrounding community through transferring the knowledge and discipline learned in school and during sports.

A key quality for a student athlete is being a good role model. Children of the community look up to student athletes for inspiration. Young children hope that one day they can be the ones making the big play on the field and excelling in the classroom. Therefore, a student athlete has a vital part in shaping the youth of the community. As a student athlete, I personally know how important this component of being an exemplar is. A few of my neighbors are significantly younger than me, and look up to me as a role model. They support me during sporting events, and congratulate me when my name is in the paper for honor roll. I feel proud and a little presumptuous when I talk to them, or see them at events, because I am aware that I have the capability to influence them and shape how they behave.

Not only are student athletes role models, but they are also mentors. Every year my Pop Warner football field was the site of the Special Olympics. As players, we were asked to volunteer a Saturday to help out with the bustle of the games. It was an enjoyable time for both the competing athletes, and the volunteers. From all the time I spent at the Special Olympics, I can recall one specific incident that has stayed with me. As a volunteer, I was asked to display the event that I was assigned too. When the first group came to my station, I demonstrated the event and explained the guidelines. After I completed this, one of the contestants told me that he would complete the event better than I did. We both laughed, and I embraced his challenge. The contestant indeed did do better than me, and his response to why he won was touching. He told me that he won because I was a good mentor. To hear this was heartwarming, and I felt a sense of gratification. I had served as his model and it showed that by displaying good actions, I helped him achieve his potential to succeed.

Through my experiences I understand how student athletes can make a difference. They are role models that can help shape youths, as well as mentors that can help people reach their potential. Student athletes are difference-makers within the community. However, above all else, I have learned that when student athletes make a difference in the community, they are repaid with joy. Making a difference is a two-way street; not only do they give to the community, but they also receive.
***FINALIST***

Student-Athletes Making a Difference

Kris Tardy
Holyoke High School

What little kid hasn’t seen a local student athlete in their city and said to themselves, “I want to be just like that when I grow up.” I know that I uttered these very words plenty of times in my life. What I’m trying to get across is that children look up to student athletes all the time. This can create a huge opportunity in making a difference in the community. That child who looked up to the student athlete now wants to make his way through the school system so he can one day play on the high school team and succeed in life. There are many different ways in which student athletes can make a difference in their communities.

A student athlete can help make a difference in the community by holding a clinic for a youth sports program. I have experienced this first hand. One weekend the boy’s varsity soccer team, which I am a captain of, and the girl’s varsity soccer team decided to hold a soccer clinic for the youth soccer program. Both teams invited all of the youth teams to join us at a popular field in town and we would help them with certain skills. The day came and I arrived at the field in amazement of how many children actually showed up. The field was packed with little athletes eager to play some soccer. As the clinic went on I had the opportunity to not only teach kids some new skills in soccer but to even talk to them about their futures. I had a group of kids who weren’t the best players there but had passion for the sport. As the clinic went on I taught them how to trap the ball and different ways to dribble. As my group of kids just ran around trying to do the different skills there was one little boy who stuck around with me. He would say things like, “How was that?” “Did you see me?” “This is hard but its fun”. As I watched him it really made me think about all the bad vices that could stop this child from playing the sport he loves. I thought it to be sort of sad that people give up the things they love in life for other things that they shouldn’t be doing. As I was still deep in my thoughts I felt a little pull on my shirt. I looked down and there was the little boy. He asked me this, “What do I have to do to be on your team?” This brought a huge smile to my face. I replied, “All you have to do is never give up at anything you do. Don’t fall into things that you know you shouldn’t be doing, and never let anyone tell you you’ll never make it.” He looked at me in amazement and said, “Ok I’ll try.” I’ll never forget this day. I just hope one day when he faces that situation, where someone offers him something bad, he remembers his dream of being on the varsity soccer team and says “sorry I have soccer practice I can’t.”

This is just one very small example that I have experienced. There are many others ways a student athlete can help the community, but if every person can make just one small difference then it can all add up to make a huge difference in the lives of many people in our communities.
My eyes wide with excitement, my nose pressed against the cold rink glass, and my mind filled with dreams of playing hockey for the high school team I am watching, this is a glimpse of my life at age six. Now, at age sixteen, I’m on the other side of that glass. I’m playing hockey in that very same rink and playing football under the Friday night lights for my local high school. I’ve learned over these past few years that being a student-athlete is more than a rite of passage; it’s a privilege, one that comes with responsibility.

As a student-athlete you represent not only yourself on the playing field but also your family, school and community. You have an obligation to give back as acknowledgement for their encouragement and support. The uniform you wear, adorned with your school colors, represents your commitment, determination, respectability, and accountability on the field as much as it does off the field. It makes you stand out from the crowd and therefore provides you with a unique opportunity to influence the people around you either directly or indirectly, to institute change and to make a positive difference in the community you live in.

Often, student-athletes are considered to be role models whose actions are emulated by others. Student-athletes can make a genuine difference in their community by just getting involved. Not only will their hard work and actions directly help others, it will encourage others to do the same. And, therefore can make a huge impact in the community. It doesn’t matter what you do or how much you do that matters. It’s just that you get involved that’s important.

For me, I like to be involved with helping younger kids learn how to play hockey. I volunteer with our local Learn to Skate/ Learn to Play Hockey Program. It brings me back to my younger days when I would watch the older kids in admiration. They taught me to try my hardest, not to be afraid to fall and if I did, to pick myself up and try again. It made me feel good about myself when I did succeed. It was a life lesson I learned and one I still rely on today. I hope my actions now will teach someone else that same lesson and that they too will pass it on to someone else later in life. Seeing the younger kids gain confidence and watching their self esteem grow as they learn how to skate, pass, and shoot is my reward. It makes me feel good about myself to help others. Like they always say, “It’s not whether you win or lose, it’s how you play the game” that counts. The same can be said about the student-athlete, it’s not whether you win or lose, it’s that you get involved that counts and that will make the biggest difference, not only in your community but in your own life as well.
The passion you use to spike a volleyball, shoot a basketball, hit a softball, or study for a big test can make such a positive difference in a game and in your grades. Imagine the change that could take place if you use that same enthusiasm that you use on the court or in the classroom to help the community become a better place. If you truly make the effort to help your community, you can make a huge difference in people’s lives.

I have had the privilege of being a student athlete. This potential leadership role can open up many opportunities for you to make a difference on the court, in the classroom and also in the lives of others around you. There are many ways you can make a difference in your neighborhood! For example, if you go to help clean up a park, this allows for children to have a safer environment to play and makes the landscape look cleaner. This could create a domino effect. If others see that people are caring for their surroundings, this could inspire them to help with another neighborhood project. Just like dominoes knocking each other over, one person or small group of volunteers can make a difference that could potentially inspire others to do the same.

Sometimes making a difference may not be cleaning a park or painting a fence, but just simply loving and caring for others. If you look around you, it is not hard to find the lonely child, the stressed-out neighbor, or the teammate that is feeling down after a loss. In the song “Give Me Your Eyes” by Brandon Heath he writes, “Give me your arms for the broken hearted. The ones that are far beyond my reach. Give me your heart for the one’s forgotten. Give me your eyes so I can see.” He is basically talking about how people nowadays just keep on walking by each other and not caring about their needs and hurts. Here he is asking God to allow him to see opportunities to help others around him. If we had that same attitude when we went to help others and truly care about the people around us, we could help change someone’s life. Sometimes the best way to help your community is not simply through cleaning, volunteering, or painting (though important) but simply loving and serving others because everyone around you matters and everyone has specific needs to be met.

Student athletes not only have the privilege to an education and sports but also to making a difference around them. You can help your community by serving your community with work, however just as importantly; you can also make a difference by having a good attitude and loving the people around you. Athletics provides a unique opportunity that could be a model of selflessness instead of being used for self-promotion.
From the minuscule cells that constitute living organisms to the multiple universal forces that maintain the planet, teamwork is a pertinent aspect that makes all functions and ambitions possible. Where would mankind be if they were forced to perform all tasks by themselves? In all reality, civilizations would have progressed infinitesimally. Simply put, as all first graders have learned: two is more than one, three is more than two, and so on. As adolescents, children naively believe that they are capable of doing all that is needed singlehandedly. However, this is not fundamentally accurate; a team is more likely to win a football game than just one all-star player competing. When youngsters engage in sports, they become student-athletes, a hardworking division of human beings who learn how to overcome tribulations. By transitioning into student-athletes, these young adults gain the ability to make a difference in the community by becoming a united force, utilizing their talents to assist others, and taking what they learn in school and applying it to everyday life. Truly, student-athletes inspire others and work together to achieve.

As a team, student-athletes can establish and run fundraisers such as carwashes, bake sales, or even jewelry sales to benefit struggling groups in their community. However, their strength in numbers has an even greater potential: bringing awareness to issues. More often than not, people are not educated on the debacles in the world today; therefore they do not know how to alleviate them. If thirty students held signs advocating for a soup kitchen volunteers around a community for two hours, undeniably, there would be an increase in the volunteer force. Student-athletes also possess a unique capability: they can introduce the enjoyment of exercise and sports to others, while teaching constructive values such as sportsmanship, dedication, and perseverance. By hosting technique clinics, founding/participating in charity games, or simply offering their experience to less advanced players (toddler or younger competitors), student-athletes become indispensable resources of progression and inspiration. In example, Olympic swimmer Cullen Jones has given motivational speeches and stroke clinics for the underprivileged. The beautiful aspect of this involvement is that it benefits the Olympian and the swimmers, because both learn from one another. Last, but by no means the least, student-athletes motivate their peers and develop their internal strength, which is crucial to overcome life’s fortuitous struggles. By personal experience, it is clear that student-athletes also become team players in the classroom, which gives others the opportunity of further comprehension.

As the Japanese proverb so wisely states, “none of us are as smart as all of us.” With more people, ideas transition from simple to complex, efforts increase from minimum to the ultimate maximum, and boundaries are nonexistent. Student-athletes bring pride to their community via academics and athletics, but more importantly, with the display of their virtues. Sports inarguably cultivate moral fiber. With this in mind, it is only logical student-athletes benefit the community in numerous ways with their teamwork, talent, and tailored attitude.
***FINALIST***

How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

Jacque Rodriguez
Narragansett Regional High School

Gerald Ford, Theodore Roosevelt, and George W. Bush not only share the title of President of the United States, they also share the title of student-athlete. While not every student-athlete will become President, each of us can make a difference in our local community. And like these Presidents who helped shape our country it is our responsibility as leaders in our school to set the example of service for others to follow.

The first place we must make a difference is on the field. Whether it’s during a game or in practice we must stand out from other students by demonstrating good sportsmanship through fair and honest play. Every team strives to finish the season as champions, but the record at the end is secondary to the integrity of the players. By making a commitment to follow the rules at all times, a student-athlete can stand out as a person of integrity. Without making and living by this commitment we would not be able to represent and bring honor to our school and families.

Off the field we must make a difference in the classroom. We can do this by maintaining the integrity we demonstrate on the field in all of our academic work. Since we represent our school on the field we are more visible than students who do not participate in sports. If we choose to sacrifice our integrity by cheating we send the message that we think we are above the rules. Because of this we must always keep our focus on maintaining the highest level of integrity and never allow ourselves to have this integrity questioned. Again, committing to do this will bring honor to our school and family, which is vital.

Through committing to the highest standards on the field and in the classroom student-athletes make a strong statement about what is important in their lives. Living with integrity while working hard, we are able to represent our school and families with pride. We are also able to step out into the community and assist others. We may have the opportunity to speak out against drug and alcohol use or we may be able to help through community clean-ups, food drives, or mentoring programs. The activities will vary, but because we have already established our good character on the field and in school as student-athletes we can step out as trusted members of the community that are working toward making a positive difference in people’s lives.

We are the leaders in our school and by committing to make a difference we will have a positive impact on our families, school, and community. And who knows what these positive choices may lead to one day. Former President George W. Bush never aspired to be President; he wanted to be just like Willie Mays. The person who will President in twenty years is already out there and making decisions about the future and it may be a high school student-athlete. It could even be me!
I owe all my success on the soccer field to those dedicated varsity players back when I was younger. I remember those early Saturday mornings when the grass was still wet with dew. My parents gave me that extra push onto the field, hot coffees acted as hand warmers as they turned to their neighbors and began to socialize. The varsity players were on the soccer field at Lenox High School welcoming me onto the field with eager smiles. They taught me how to kick the ball properly and how to pass to my teammates. I learned by example how to stay positive on the field and what good sportsmanship looks like. I enjoyed my Saturday mornings so much when I was younger, but it was not until I got older that I really began to appreciate why.

Being a part of the girls varsity team for Lenox this year is the greatest experience anyone could ask for. We all do everything together, including getting up early every Saturday morning to go teach the screaming youngsters how to play the game we all love. I never understood what my predecessors went through those mornings until it was my turn. I realized that it takes a lot of effort to wake up early Saturday morning to go out in the cold for two hours with wet feet while little kids run around kicking soccer balls everywhere and tugging at your arms. But I remember what it was like to be excited to play soccer that one day of the week. The little kids look forward to learning how to play, to being with their friends, and even to see us as coaches. It is our responsibility to keep their love of soccer alive; to teach those children how to kick the ball with the inside of their foot instead of their toes. We are the ones who teach them how to pass a ball instead of stealing it from their own teammates. It is our job to put on a smiling face to those kids who are too nervous to leave mommy and daddy’s side and join the field. Those Saturday mornings are the experiences that will stick with the kids the most. What they learn then is going to be their basis for the rest of their soccer careers. But the most important thing we varsity players can do is show them what it means to be a team player. We represent our school and are role models to those little kids.

Student athletes can make a world of difference in the lives of those who look up to them. We varsity players could represent the future in a little kid’s eyes. They will cherish those moments on the field and want to be just like the older kids who coached them. It’s been ten years now, and I still remember my experiences on those Saturday mornings. Now that the cycle is coming full circle for me, I am able to get the true appreciation for what we do as players. We give back to the community by keeping the cycle going. My hope is that those U6-U10 kids today will grow up to enjoy the game like I do. Hopefully someday they will teach their followers the same elements they are being taught by us now.
In our boys basketball program we strive to be positive role models in our school community by teaching the fundamentals to the youth in our towns as well as the Special Olympics team here at school. As a team, we not only focus on basketball, we focus on giving back to our community and making a difference. We feel that it is up to us to set a good example for our peers. As our Coach always tells us, “If it is to be, it is up to me”; which means that we are all responsible for our own actions. As student athletes, we use this to motivate ourselves to make a significant difference. We hold a basketball clinic every fall where we interact with players in grades first through seventh, who are the future of our program and pass on the lessons of life and basketball that Coach Rodgers has instilled upon us. The kids look up to us, so we always aim to set good examples for them to follow.

Our team slogan is “Mean it!” and we attempt to pass this on to the youngsters of our community and help them to fully understand what it involves to “Mean It!” They must fully apply themselves to whatever they do in life, not just go through the motions, whether it’s in the classroom, on the court or in their personal choices. If the kids have the mind-set to always mean what they do, then they will ultimately be successful in whatever they attempt. They in turn will be strong role models in their community. We stress that education comes before all else, although sports are important, doing well in the classroom is essential. We know as a team that the word student comes before athlete in the designation “student-athlete” and we are accountable to this necessity.

One of the most controversial subjects in the community and our school system is the illegal use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. It is vital that we set good examples for our peers and younger classmen by resisting and staying away from these harmful substances. It is the responsibility of our generation to move away from these disastrous substances. We must set a strong example for the future generations of our community and continue the legacy to refrain from the use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs. We will strive to make them aware of the repercussions of making poor decisions. More importantly, help them realize they do not need to drink and get involved in drugs in order to feel included or confident.

As a team, we feel that giving back to the community that supports us in all we strive to accomplish is very important, especially to the younger children. In the future, they will be where we are now. They will be the ones passing on the lessons that we taught them. All we can hope is that we set a positive example for them to follow in the future.
Many students get involved with athletics and find a passion for any number of sports. Sports are fun, keep people in shape, allow them to be a part of a spirited team, and bring people together to form lifelong friendships. Many young men and women also enjoy helping out around their community. They may volunteer their time and energy for worthy causes, lend a hand to their neighbors, or promote good behavior by acting as role models. Being active is essential for the well-being of students themselves, while community service is important to the people around them. Student-athletes are in a great position to make a difference in the community around them.

One of them most basic ways that young athletes can benefit the community is by simply volunteering to do service work. An entire team can have fun by volunteering as a group, doing projects like picking up litter, hanging clothes at a thrift store, or visiting patients at a hospital. Players can use their athleticism to do physical labor, or they can teach others about their sport. I played baseball every spring throughout elementary school, but one event that stands out from all of those seasons is the day my team participated in the annual park clean-up. We spent many long hours raking the fields, shoveling dirt, and picking up rocks, but we made a fun day out of it. In the end, the community's fields were in great shape, and I had a blast. When athletes come together as a team like mine did, they are able to get extensive work done for an honorable cause. The charitable work of athletes benefits the community greatly.

As well as doing volunteer work, athletes of all ages are constantly making a difference by behaving as role models for their community's youth. Young boys and girls look up to student-athletes because they are dedicated, healthy, and hard-working. In addition, athletes frequently inspire younger children to try a new sport because kids look up to them. For instance, my brother began playing football this year after watching many of my friends play. He went to their games religiously and persistently asked them questions about the game. Sure enough, he now enjoys playing for our town's team. Student-athletes are inspirational figures whom young people often look up to.

There are a number of simple ways in which high-school athletes can make a difference in their community. It is important for students to give back to the society that supports them, and the community truly does appreciate it when athletes pitch in and help out. One of the largest advantages to doing service work with a team of close friends is that everybody gets to have fun. Volunteering does not have to be boring! There are many components to a healthy, balanced lifestyle, including physical fitness, giving back, socializing, and obtaining an education. When student-athletes get involved in their communities, they are setting themselves up for sure success.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Carley Benoit
Mahar Regional School

Ever since I was about seven years old, I knew that one day I wanted to be like my older brother, Brian. Seeing him everyday on the Pop Warner football field as a young boy was an inspiration to me to play sports and make good decisions in life, just like he did. As my brother grew up, I watched his middle school games turn into high school varsity games. As he dominated the field, he dominated the community’s hearts with all of his passion. By seeing his enthusiasm in what he loved to do, he influenced me to be a part of the community and to be a good person, by making the right decisions. I have learned over the years that student-athletes have a major impact on the community, most of the time without even knowing it.

My brother got where he is today by being the person he should be, and making the right decisions every single day. He knew that his passion in life was sports, and that if he wanted to continue to do what he loved, he had to get good grades and follow the rules that go along with sports and school. He knew that if he made one wrong decision of drinking alcohol, doing drugs, or bullying anyone, his passion of playing sports would have to come to an end, because it is not allowed. This idea is key to how much student-athletes make a difference in the community. Student-athletes show other people that in life as in sports, you have to make the right decisions and keep your head on straight so that you can keep doing what you want to do, and also to make everyone proud.

For people who have experienced the influence of student-athletes in their life, just like how I was influenced by my brother, they may find that great things will unravel in front of their very own eyes. At one moment, a person sees themselves as a little boy or girl sitting on the bleachers of a sports game, thinking to themselves about how much they want to be like the star player they are watching, and the next thing they know, they are the ones who are being watched by hundreds of fans underneath the lights at their very own game. If a person learns the lesson in life that student-athletes try to teach every single day on the field and in the classroom, they will see that it really is amazing to be an influence on the community. Many student-athletes have influenced my life and the decisions I make, and because of it, I have gone far on the sports field and also in the classroom. Without knowing it, student-athletes make a difference in the community so much, by influencing the people around them, and making lives around them so much better and worthwhile. If it wasn’t for student-athletes, the community just would not be the same.
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How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

Allison Kurpiel
Lynn Classical High School

Student-athletes differ from the average high school student. They show better time management, dedication, social skills, and discipline. They show physical capabilities higher than most students, and often hold leadership positions. That is why student-athletes need to pave the way for community work and general bettering of the community.

Student-athletes know what it is like to be on a team. They work together with a group of peers to achieve one goal. Why not make that goal to better one’s community? Student athletes, especially the chosen captains, often know how to lead their peers in a positive, encouraging way, not a condescending, forceful way. Student-athletes, being fundamentally masters of the academia and sports, must inherently have the time management skills needed to keep successful in both areas. These time management skills can be very useful in actually making time for community services.

Using all of these qualities, student-athletes can, if they put their minds to it, round up a group of peers. Because these students are generally well-respected among their peers, this is easier than the average student. They can then organize activities such as feeding to the homeless, reading to children, or cleaning up the environment to give back. It isn’t hard to set up. Using physical capabilities, student athletes can also manually clean up their community. After all, the student-athletes do receive benefits (sports equipment, sports uniforms, and coaches) from their community and thus have a greater reason to give back.

Besides all of these larger scale goals, student athletes can use their tiny advantages to give back marginally. They can use their social influence to discourage hazing, cheating, drinking, bullying, and other problems teenagers in large groups sometimes make. Not only do student athletes have a whole team of students to discourage this behavior, they also often are well respected by the whole school and can use this to their advantage. There is power in numbers, and most teams have twenty students. If they see bullying, the team can step in. If they see hazing, they have the direct ability to stop it. Student-athletes are already centered in the middle of the school community and thus have easy assess-ability to the choices one faces in either being active to better it or being inactive.

Student-athletes often have fund-raised money. Why not take a portion of that money made by canning or selling candy and use it to donate to a charity. Again, teams of people are a lot more productive than individuals. Teams work cohesively together to achieve goals, and they certainly can do this in a direction which is not win-centered but rather positively-centered. Student-athletes can give back in a variety of ways and the only limit is one’s will to try. “We cannot live only for ourselves. A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow men” (Herman Melville). Student-athletes are especially connected to each other, their peers, and the administration, and must respond thus.
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said that “Everyone can be great, because everyone can serve.” Dr. King made an immense difference in American society over 50 years ago, but his message still holds true. Each and every person can make a difference with service to their community, and their world. Student-athletes are especially capable of doing this because of their role in the community personally, with their team, and in the school setting. First of all, A student-athlete is responsible for representing their school as well as their team, so they must always remember to act as an ambassador would. They must be kind, caring, and polite to everyone they meet. This responsibility keeps student-athletes from making detrimental decisions; therefore each young adult involved in sports becomes one more positive influence in their community. In addition, as a student-athlete, one belongs to something greater than themselves; a team. This group of hardworking and motivated individuals can also contribute to the community more than a single person can. In my school, Sturgis Charter Public School, when our volleyball team holds bake sales at school, I am always stunned at what half an hour preparing baked goods can do. We easily raise money, which can be put towards any charity or community project. Teams can also volunteer in their community by doing things such as beach cleanups, food drives, volunteering at homeless or animal shelters, and tutoring fellow students. This action of helping their community also brings the team closer together, making them a cohesive unit on and off the field. Finally, Student-athletes also play a very important role in the classroom. They are often looked up to, because a student-athlete must be well rounded. They must do well in school to be allowed on the team, so they are always committed to their education. They are physically fit from exercise, and have social charisma that is built from being part of a team. They have good time management skills that stem from having to balance sports, school work, and a social life. Also, the level of sportsmanship needed to participate on a sports team forces them to be level-headed and calm, meaning that they can help to prevent or break up any disagreement. These qualities make a great leader in a school setting. Other students are inspired to work hard and be more like these athletes, and also they can help others with their work. This better the education of every student involved, which in turn benefits the community by giving it more educated and aware members. Every student-athlete helps shape the future of their community because of their ability and responsibility to serve in it personally, with their team, and in their school.
An individual athlete’s effect on their community may cause a ripple effect. However, a team’s impact can create a tidal wave of difference. Aristotle says it perfectly, “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” The energy a single person brings to a cause is proliferated when banded together to create a whole. Every person is more valuable when surrounded by their counterparts: team members. A sports team is influential and powerful within their educational spectrum and throughout their local community. To leave an impression on the surrounding world, teams must share their love of being a part of a bonded group with the world through taking action. When a team shares an activity that they are passionate about with the community, the message comes across much stronger. Hosting a 5k run to benefit an organization that helps those in need is a perfect example of mixing a personal team passion (athleticism) with the community. Runners and athletes throughout the community will doubtlessly come out to support a cause – perhaps the entry fee could go to an organization which helps those with muscular dystrophy. Or those with prosthetics. Perhaps a field hockey team could host a ‘play day’ where younger athletes and their families in their community could be introduced to the sport program early on and witness the team spirit and connectedness of the team. The players, sharing their passion of field hockey, would have fun teaching the younger kids plays. When you combine passion, athletes and community, success is felt all around, by contributors and recipients alike. The commitment to each other and the team can be the model for the same type of commitment and passion to the local community. The feeling that someone has your back at anytime is vital in the spirit of camaraderie. When this spirit is set to action, the tidal wave is felt. Being inspired is often the root of beginning a new project – and beginning action. Involve a sports team to get the entire community moving for a cause and the wave of support will be limitless.
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How Student-Athletes Can Make a Difference in Our Community

Evan Ryan
Norton High School

With the economic hardships all around us we as student-athletes need not acclimatize to the situation. We are needed to help out in the behemoth responsibility to assist in our community; and this can make a difference for everybody. With increasing budget tightening and cutbacks communities are faced with empty slots and positions that are not being filled. Some of these positions directly affect students like us. We can become leaders in our community by pitching in and alleviating some of the burdens our communities face during these hard times. Whether it’s helping to start a youth soccer team or helping to stock shelves at the food pantry, we can make a difference in the lives of many people in our community. I believe we are role models who set examples for the younger players to emulate. If they look up to us for our athletic skills, they may simulate our enthusiasm for helping others as well. Studies show that student athletes are role models for the new athletes coming in. These new athletes look up to us not only for our athleticism, but also for our leadership. If you look at your school and look for someone to emulate it will almost always be a student-athlete. Studies also show that our habits can be transcended if these habits are formed during adolescence. That is why it is so important to start community service at a young age; so if a student athlete helps out in the community maybe the younger generations will emulate other athletes and want to help out. However if you don’t help out in your community at a young age there is a probability that you won’t when you’re an adult.

Some of our citizens believe that teenagers’ words are diatribe ramblings and have nothing to say. Why is that you ask? I believe that these people have not had the opportunity to interact with our student-athletes who have made a difference. Imagine if they had interacted with them, how would our communities be different today? My guess would be that the communities would be a better place for both the people in it and the student-athletes. Many times I have been unfairly judged because of the actions of other students and I have had to prove myself before people would take a chance on me. Hopefully my positive participation will help be an advocate for the students who follow me. My world would be a different place; if not for the mentoring of the student-athletes who made a difference in my life.

People think of student-athletes for what they accomplish on the field and not so much off it. You can choose to be taciturn or you could be the best on your team, but you won’t become the most valuable player until you help to alleviate the problems in your community as well.
Student-Athletes Making a Difference

John Tobin

Woburn Memorial High School

Student-Athletes perform miracles all the time. Whether they are the going up against the undefeated team as the sixteenth seed and shock the whole country by coming out on top, or whether they singlehandedly broke a record that was considered impossible. What about when they are off the field and in the classroom? They can manage to ace their math test with the knowledge in the back of their head that later today they’ll be covered by an All- American defender. Student-athletes aren’t just normal students that go to school and spend the rest of their day studying and they definitely aren’t just airhead jocks. They manage to perfectly balance athletics with their studies. They are the future leaders of our society. What if they joined with all the other teams in their community though? What miracles can Student-athletes perform when they’re working with other teams instead of against them?

What are Student-athletes the best at? Well, obviously they are the best at being student and athletes. So, the best way they can help in the community would be to help their successors. Student-athletes are some of the biggest role models to the younger kids in the community. The best way to do this would be by going to the schools and helping the children write and read and let them understand that these are some of the most important years of their lives. From here, Student-athletes can get the children involved in athletics and help keep them healthy and in shape. Student-athletes can help point out to the children that athletics and your health are just as important as schoolwork and vice versa. This will help create a smart and healthy youth.

Why stop at the youth though? What about the former Student-athletes that lived and played during the “Glory Days?” Student-athletes can give back to their communities by visiting the elderly in nursing homes. The greatest gift you could give to the elderly would be visiting them. The elderly sit in a hospital-like building all day and feel terribly isolated and excluded from society and normal everyday activities. A time that the elderly most likely miss is their high school days. And what better way for the elderly to reminisce on these days than with current high school students? Incredibly connections can form between the youth and the elderly. They would be perfect to share stories with together. The elderly can relive the days of their youth by hearing stories from the Student-athletes and get a sense of nostalgia while the elderly can tell stories of their high school glory days. Few things make the elderly happier than telling stories.

Student-athletes can make a difference in the community in so many ways. They could plant trees and pick up trash, but why not use their potential and abilities to make a difference in what they are good at: changing the lives of and making connections with the former and future student athletes.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

Chidera Onyeoziri
Brockton High School

Being able to function as a proficient student athlete is a difficult challenge. It entails so much more than meets the eye because, though most people have a general knowledge of the word, only few can truly understand the complexity of it. As a student athlete I’m only one piece of a larger puzzle, the puzzle being my cross-country team. Each piece is different in its own way but when combined the end result is beautiful. This can only happen if each person is working to improve for the greater good of the team. Thus, there is certain strength in this sort of mentality, making it helpful not only when engaging in a particular sport, but also in real life application.

A community can be viewed as a team, made up of varying individuals who lead different lives. I’ve learnt that by using qualities learned from being part of a team, such as communication skills, leadership skills or open-mindedness, I’m able to achieve more. I’ve wanted to achieve more; therefore I applied for the mayor’s youth council and “made the cut”. Joining the youth council truly made me aware of issues dealt with in the community. Upon joining, the council launched an anti-violence campaign. Violence being a profound issue in our city, we took it upon ourselves to try to turn things around and make our city, the city of Brockton, a much safer one.

Starting was the hard part, but eventually we began to build up momentum; the same can be said for a runner, who begins a race and struggles to find his/her rhythm. The first thing we needed was a logo, so we held a contest and the winners were announced by the Mayor herself. Once our logo was decided upon we needed the support of local businesses, and a better way to institute an anti-violence campaign involving the locals. We were going to make this big; our plan was to have our logo printed at bus stops, on the buses themselves, on billboards, on the windows of resident businesses, and in conspicuous places around the city. There were a few bumps along the way, which was meant to happen as we had several intelligent individuals, including myself of course, congregated in order to share ideas. Due to the fact that I, being a student athlete, was used to working together with others to reach a common goal, I was quite at home while on the council. Student-athletes may not understand how useful they can be outside of their team. The opportunity to get involved with something bigger than one’s self is always around the corner, if we are only willing to grab it. Student-athletes can make a difference in the community by getting involved; they have a greater chance of making a difference as they have the skills needed in working side by side with others for the greater good.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

Nicholas LeBlanc
Clinton High School

Student-athletes need to come together with community leaders to make a difference; they need to build a relationship with one another. By adopting community service student-athletes can make a difference. Members of different sports teams could work with youth programs such as youth football, youth soccer, minor/little league baseball to name a few. Student-athletes can teach younger athletes how to play and understand their sport, teamwork and sportsmanship. Within the school community athletes from other sports volunteer to announce other sporting events. Many younger athletes look up to high school athletes, they look at them as local heroes. By becoming role models, these future student-athletes will also learn a sense of community.

Student–athletes can also work together with the community by volunteering their time to assist elderly homeowners by helping them with yard work, visiting residents in nursing homes, organizing community cleanups, or reading to younger students.

Student-athletes in my school help with youth football as football and cheerleading coaches, help coach or umpire minor league baseball, assist at basketball camps, or are members of our school’s Excel Club that is based on community service. The girl’s fall sports teams at my school sponsors a yearly “Pink Night” for breast cancer awareness. I volunteer with the school’s summer enrichment program for a week long summer baseball camp. Recently in my community we learned of a 3 year old boy who is facing a battle with leukemia, a road race was set up in this boy’s name to help his family with the financial costs. My football teammates, myself and the cross country team took part in this road race, it felt good to come together with my team in a small way to try to make a difference in the life of this little boy and his family.

When you can make a young kid feel good about themselves by using words of encouragement, even when they make a mistake, it makes you feel that you made a difference and want to do even more. I had student-athletes encourage and work with me when I was younger, it taught me to give back and help others in the same way.

Student-athletes are perceived as self-centered, uncaring or too interested in their own lives to care about what is going on around them. By encouraging student-athletes at the beginning of each season to sign a contract to promise to give one weekend a month to help someone in the smallest way will lead others in the community to come together to offer their assistance. Student-Athletes with the help of community leaders can make their community one that people will use as an example of how to make a difference. They have a responsibility to their teams, school and the people around them to set an example of how to become caring members of their communities, one that others will follow and can be proud of.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

Kyra Pellant
Notre Dame Academy (Hingham)

Dear Journal,

We are almost done with the fall season, and I want to meet with my team to try to get everyone together to do community service. At our school, we have a Cougars for the Cure club, which supports different national causes by raising money for them each month. I want my team to do something different, not just give money, but give our time and make an effort to really make a difference locally.

My suggestion would be to have a Step Forward Sports day, at least three times a year, so that Fall, Winter and Summer sports teams can give back in the way of service. I believe that this should be mandatory for any student athlete that competes on a high school team. An example of giving back to the community could be as simple as planting a community garden, harvesting the crop, and donating the vegetables to a local shelter or food pantry. Another idea could include working with the elderly at a center; pairing seniors up with athletes to help them grocery shop. Clean-up town or beach days also could be initiated.

By rallying together as a team, it could really make a difference by providing human power to needs within the community, and projects that need to be accomplished. Volunteering at various organizations, within communities, or with groups of people can really be transformational experiences, not only to the recipients’ of the service, but also to the athletes involved. Teamwork that is off the field, court, and rink or out of the pool can provide team cohesiveness for altruistic reasons, not just to win or to accomplish a task through competition. Working with each other, alongside each other, for each other and not against each other, has valuable lessons in itself. Thoroughly researching and seeking out leadership roles for teams to participate in can build bonds, empower individuals, and form relationships that might not have necessarily been formed. Setting a good example, and partnering with corporate organizations, would also be another way to make a difference.

I have many good ideas, and I bet when we have a team meeting to discuss this, we could come up with 50 more interesting volunteer projects. I am sure that the coaches would agree. Doing community service has been such an important role in my life so far, I can’t imagine not giving back in some way, and what better way to do it, but with teammates? I have always taken a leadership role in seeking out those in need, and organizing ways to help make our world a better place. Starting this process, and asking my team to help, will truly make a difference.

That’s all for now, have to get some homework done before practice!
The Art of Giving
Joey Colbert
Plymouth South High School

Three years ago, as I entered the halls of Plymouth South High School as a freshman, my dream was to be a part of the high school hockey team. This dream I have had since I was 5 or 6. As the hockey season rolled around, I was excited to be a part of the program. I quickly learned that being a member of the team involved much more than the games and practices. Community Service and helping others was a huge part of our coach’s expectations and requirements. I am lucky enough to have a great family who support me and help me when I need it, as a freshman, I didn’t know that so many people were in need. We as a team, collected coats for those that couldn’t afford one, held a food drive for the hungry, and at Christmas time brought toys to the toys for tot programs so Santa could come to them too. I then started to realize the importance of giving to others. I could only imagine the kids’ faces on Christmas morning to see the toys under their tree. As a sophomore, we took the volunteering and community service to another level. We added to our service, we volunteered at the youth hockey Christmas party which was great. The little future hockey players looked up to us as we helped them create Christmas crafts and played games with them. Another community service we did which sticks out to me was helping out at the local youth hockey opening day. The feeling I got showing the players how to skate backwards, forward and stick handling made me smile. I felt lucky to help these future high school players out. We continued to help others out as a team. At the end of the season we received the MIAA Community Service award for the state. It was a great feeling that we were able to help so many others. Community Service can also be helping someone out right at home. Two years ago when my grandfather died my grandmother was left all alone for the first time in 49 years. My grandmother comes to stay in Plymouth in the house right next door to mine for 3 months at a time. She was so used to being with my grandfather that she never got used to staying by herself so when she is here with us; I stay with her at night so she is not afraid. It’s nice to keep her company. Community Service is such an important part of growing up. You learn that some people are not as fortunate as you and need help and support. As I start my senior year at Plymouth South, I hope to show the incoming freshman and underclassman the meaning of giving through Community Service programs this year.
MIAA Sportsmanship Essay
Abby Raftery
Dover-Sherborn High School

Student athletes underestimate the affect that they can have on a community. Often times they assume that their actions are not very significant. Truthfully, however, their actions are just the opposite. When teams work and make an effort to give back to their communities they can really help to improve the community. If student-athletes take time out of their day, which are usually extremely busy, to visit soup kitchens or volunteer at a local home, they touch people's lives. Carrying out these actions does so much for those who are in need. It makes a difference in their lives to know that teenage students care enough to come and spend their time with them. It can help to put a smile on someone's face that hasn't found anything to smile about for a long time. It also helps student-athletes feel good about themselves.

Bringing a positive presence into the atmosphere of a community causes others to want to be a part of it. Seeing young athletes make a difference in the lives of people, helps to spark a common need to make other people's lives better. The positive atmosphere is contagious. Student athletes make their community better by improving the lives of people in their community. The students broaden their vision of seeing the world by looking into other's eyes.

Not only are student athletes able to help motivate people in their community to rise up and help, but they are also able to help make their own community become a better place to live in. Sports teams work together to help clean up their community. From recycling at the dump to planting new trees, there are always new projects to be taken on. Keeping the environment clean and friendly is an essential part to a community. As more projects are completed, more beauty is seen throughout. Athletes are able to take on projects that struggle to find anyone willing to work on and simply do them to lend a hand. They are able to do this because they have learned to work together with teamwork. Even the smallest of actions can greatly improve a community's environment, as small things go a long way.

The skills that an athlete learns by becoming a team player travel with them throughout all their experiences in life. They learn how to work together, be a leader, create a great trust with one another, and put their efforts together toward a common cause. Student athletes develop a sense of being a part of something that is bigger than the individual. Individualism, they realize, is something that will not get them far in life. Developing knowledge of such details can make athletes want to use these skills to work together to help others. They want to be able to be a part of other acts, just as important. The skills that they have learned follow them to form decisions that can yield significant difference in the communities around them.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Sean O’Connor
Mount Greylock Regional High School

The gun fires into the dreary skies. Red and yellow flags flap against the harsh fall air. A droplet rolls down the stem in a bouquet. Families huddle under umbrellas holding up signs reminding their loved ones to “run fast. Cookies, brownies, and other healthy post race snacks sit patiently on saturated picnic benches. Applause drowns out the sound of cold rain against a metal roof.

Tremendous amounts of volunteering allow a special last home race for several Mount Greylock seniors. Love, care, and time are meticulously devoted by the community for the athletes. Communities give so much to student-athletes simply because they care. What do they expect back?

What a community expects back from student-athletes and what they deserve back are now where near in comparison. A good community is giving to athletes everything it can expecting absolutely nothing. Student-athletes must take special notice of the things that are done for them. So many aspects of the community make high school athletics so special. Acknowledging the teacher that lets you leave early for your meet, thanking the bus driver for listening to your bad singing, and competing to your potential for everyone who takes time from their day to support you are of utmost importance. Paying gratitude to everyone is large part of how student athletes can make a difference.

To create community we must show appreciation. A little thank you, or a big smile, can make a difference. Every student-athlete needs to show a dignity and class that will make the entire community benefit. All athletes should display a social conscience that will inevitably bring people together. To make the greatest difference all athletes only need to do a small part.

Giving back does not always need to be an extravagant project. Student-athletes need a readiness to help. When the community consists of caring and compassion, it is at its best. When athletes are actively participating in community service, putting forth positive attitude, and are working to improve themselves they can say that they are doing their part. The best way for student-athletes to make a difference in the community is by doing it one at a time.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

Georgina Dominique
Boston Latin Academy

My name is Georgina Dominique and I am a senior at Boston Latin Academy. I play three sports, one during the fall, winter, and spring. During the fall I am on the Latin Academy Varsity soccer team, during the winter I run indoor track for Latin Academy, and in the spring I play lacrosse for an organization called MetroLacrosse. I have received a lot of mixed feelings in regards to the amount of sports I play. On more than one occasion I have had people say to me, “Why do you play so many sports? Sports are for boys.” As well as, “You play lacrosse? That’s a sport for white kids.” I usually just brush it off and try to educate them on the fact that sports are for everyone of any gender or race.

I have been playing lacrosse with MetroLacrosse for over six years now. MetroLacrosse is an organization that is dedicated to giving youth from mostly minority communities in and around Boston the opportunity to play lacrosse. Over this past summer I was given the chance to work as a Coach-In-Training or C.I.T. with MetroLacrosse. As a C.I.T., I traveled from camp to camp in and around the Boston area and taught campers the fundamentals of the game of lacrosse. I went to camps in neighborhoods like Roxbury and East Boston whose campers would otherwise have virtually no access to the sport of lacrosse. Not only did I love playing lacrosse as a job but I really enjoyed the reactions and happiness of the children. Many of them fell in love with the game of lacrosse and begged me and the other C.I.T.’s to come back every day. My favorite part of my whole experience was seeing kids having fun while playing the sport I love as well as seeing how many kids signed up to play with MetroLacrosse after a clinic. I was opening more doors for the kids just by simply sharing one of my hobbies with them.

Working as a C.I.T. this past summer had a lasting impact on me. It made me realize how privileged I am to have had access to all the sports and extracurricular activities that I have had access to in my life. The experience also made me realize how important it is for younger generations to have the same opportunities that I did. Being able to expose kids to something that they might not have ever had the opportunity to get involved in, especially a sport I love, made me feel as though I was helping broaden their horizons. I strongly believe that sports are can play a very positive role in the lives of children. In the future, I hope to be able to continue to work with programs like MetroLacrosse because I believe that all kids should be able to play any sport they desire no matter their environment.
The Role of Student Athletes Within our Community
Mitchel Francois
Green Academy

Student athletes make a difference in the community just by being involved. Playing sports in your community brings the community together. Throughout my high school years I have played soccer, basketball, softball, and now currently volleyball and endlessly waiting to participate in indoor track and softball during the upcoming winter and spring. During those exciting, exhausting, intense, and entertaining seasons I have spent playing sports, parents, teachers, peers and others come and gather in as one whole community in one space to support our student athletes during their games.

Being a student athlete also inspires our peers and our siblings to also get active and participate in sports. When they are observing how much you are always active academically and physically, competing in games and having a good time, they want the same experience that you are having. Those experiences will inspire them to show off their academic, leadership, communication, and physical skills in the sport that they decide to participate in. They will want to be part of a team and community that cares and supports them.

I started playing sports my sophomore year. My parents were and still are not the type of parents that really look forward to attending parent-teacher conferences unless it was obligated to do so. When I started getting involved in sports, my parents would make an effort to show at my games to support the team and me. Also by attending some of my games they had a chance to meet some of my teachers that showed up to the games and have their own little meeting about school and myself.

I am proud to be a student athlete. I enjoy playing sports, meeting new people, making new friends and just having a good time. I like it when I am in the middle of a game and I glance at the bleachers and I see my peers and parents cheering for us. Our community actually gives us more energy and support whether we win the game or not. How can student athletes make a difference in the community? I would say we make a difference by bringing the community together and inspiring our peers and siblings to follow in our footsteps.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

Michelle Whyte
Blackstone-Millville Regional High School

The community needs good role models, and student-athletes are just that. We can easily apply the skills we learn in our sports to the rest of our lives. The community needs leaders, not followers; luckily, being on a sports team has helped myself and many of my fellow teammates make a difference. A very small, close-knit population makes up Blackstone-Millville Regional. Because of this, it has been easy to apply the skills I have learned through playing basketball and field hockey to help aid my undersized town.

Basketball has instilled a sense of leadership and teamwork within myself. I owe much of who I am, as both a player and a person, to my past coaches. Many of my team members also realize that they are in debt to those who taught them not only how to shot fake, but also how to be good role models. We have felt so indebted that we as a team have volunteered at summer basketball programs and fall clinics in our town. Teaching the elementary school children the fundamentals of dribbling a ball is rewarding in and of itself. However, knowing that these impressionable youngsters are looking to us young adults as possible role models is incredible. My team has been able to give these children a love for basketball and an introduction to sportsmanlike conduct.

Field hockey has also been useful in developing skills that one can use to make a difference in the community. Our intense practices, focused on tough runs and extensive drills, taught my teammates and myself dedication. We have learned to see things through once we set our minds to it. Once one girl decided to use pink tape to cover her stick to support breast cancer awareness. It has suddenly become a planned day where our entire team will wear as much pink as possible to support the cause. It has become such a popular thought on the team that some girls are even talking about hosting a walk next year and splitting the profits between our field hockey team and the Breast Cancer Research Foundation. I have faith that the girls will see it through if they are serious about making a change. We have the motivation to make all the difference in the world, so long as we put our minds to it.

By being leaders, athletes can help nurture the younger generation. Also, the intensity we have when it comes to sports can be highly productive if it is used in a volunteer setting. Though the individual skills we athletes accumulate through many years of games and practice do not seem overtly impressive, once all the skills are connected it leaves a person who is full of all the tools necessary to make a difference in the community.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

Michael Brooks
Everett High School

Many people only understand what student athletes do on the field, without realizing they contribute off the field. Many student athletes bring their leadership qualities from the field into the community. I am a senior captain of the basketball team at Everett High School and I try to give back to my community as much as possible. On the court I try to be a leader for my team but off the courts I try to be a leader in the community. What really bothers me is how athletes are perceived in school; most people think that athletes are “dumb jocks” that only care about sports. I try to change people’s perspective of athletes by getting involved in multiple clubs that benefit the community.

I am involved in numerous community oriented groups. These clubs involve Key Club, Students Initiating Change (SIC), the American Red Cross, and Crimson Crew. Last year I was inducted into the Everett Chapter of the National Honor Society, easily my proudest moment in my life. Students in this prestigious group must maintain a 3.7 GPA while earning over 60 hours of community service. Each member earned their hours differently; I earned mine in a way that and incorporated sports. All organizations could use more volunteers. My former Little League coach happens to teach at the high school and I asked him about helping his team out. He was happy to let me help, and I began attending practice, where I would shag fly balls or work with the lefty pitchers. I also scooped slush and took out trash bags for their field day and opening day. I hope I set an example for younger players to one day give back to their league where they once played. My dad helped me earn hours as well. He coaches a church league basketball team and he needed someone to do the book and work with the forwards. So every Saturday and Sunday when I did not have practice I would head over to the gym and help them out.

A student athlete can also get involved in the community outside of sports, too. Last year, NHS helped organize and run a Special Olympics event at the stadium. Once we arrived we could see how excited each athlete was to be there. I instantly made friends with a few of the athletes and I think they were very excited to see an older athlete like me helping them out. I hope they saw me as a role model of some sort. The event was fun for everyone, but especially the young athletes.

As much as I enjoy being a leader on the court, being a leader in the community is more important. Athletes are often seen as representatives of the community and they need to do their job by setting a positive example for others. If athletes are responsible role models then others will follow their footsteps, and each community will improve.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Julianne McShane
Notre Dame Academy

Nothing beats the feeling of sprinting through the finish line after mentally and physically exhausting myself over 3.1 miles of cross country terrain. Millions of other high school athletes could commiserate with me—to put it simply, student-athletes live and work for the feeling of achievement. Consequently, sports are a vital priority in the lives of millions of American high school students. Whether these teens realize it or not, they are cultivating their personal morals and beliefs through athletics. Athletics cultivate and encourage sportsmanship and leadership, and although athletes can make a positive impact in their communities through service projects, I believe that the most significant way for student-athletes to make a positive difference in their communities is by incorporating these virtues into daily life.

The first lesson that any young athlete learns is sportsmanship. To me, sportsmanship is simply being there for both teammates and opponents, and treating them as one would like to be treated. Sportsmanship and leadership are inseparable, because in order to be a humble winner, a gracious loser, and an encouraging teammate, one must be a leader. Last November, my coaches generously bestowed me with my team’s Sportsmanship Award at our cross country banquet based on the way I had helped a teammate who was suffering at a practice on a blustery October day. We were doing a four mile tempo run, and as we began to run hard, a teammate that I had been running with began breathing heavily. “I think I’m having an asthma attack,” she said. “But keep going.” There was no way that I was going to selfishly continue on without her. I was not thinking about glory or recognition; I was simply remembering the principal of sportsmanship—being there for one’s teammates and opponents and treating them as one would like to be treated.

I stopped running, and my teammate and I walked back to school. Her breathing calmed down, and before we knew it, we were talking and laughing. As we walked back to school, she repeated “thank you so much” countless times. Although I was humbled and grateful to receive the Sportsmanship Award from my coaches, I stopped to help a teammate on that autumn day based on my belief of being there for others. I ended the day contented that I had contributed to my community and my teammate in a positive way, through my sport.

The moral of my story is that student-athletes can make a difference within their communities, schools, and teams in small ways in their daily lives. Whether it is leading a community outreach project or simply helping a friend in need, student-athletes can find ways to integrate leadership and sportsmanship into daily life. Teens can be role models at school by representing their sport and what it stands for. By applying these values cultivated through athletics and being a leader in every situation, an athlete can make a significant impact, even if it is only remembered by one person.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

Alex Coucci
Dartmouth High School

Athletics play a huge role in certain communities. I read an article about the University of Arizona the other day. In the article, it stated that their student athletes have all made pledges to help their community as a whole. What makes this program so intriguing, is the fact that the students realize that they do not have to do some elaborate, crazy plan to better the community. They understand that little acts of charity, or kindness around their town will help to bring the community together.

Athletics can be extremely influential when it comes to community moral. What some student athletes do not realize is how someone composes themselves during an athletic event, says a lot about not just their character, but their town too. The view among students about other schools primarily comes from the way they have acted to each other during a sporting event. Therefore, a main way a student athlete can make a difference in their community is by being respectful to the people you play against because the way you act during the game, is the way your entire school and town will be viewed by other people.

However it does not just start and end with sporting events. A great way to bring a community together is by doing service projects with neighboring towns and schools. By doing this, students get to meet other students and can gain that mutual respect that is so pivotal for building up a good friendship between communities. These projects could be something as simple as helping to clean up around the town or doing fundraisers to generate money for the schools. By having a good relationship with other towns, a community will thrive.

But these ideas cannot just be talked about and expected to get done. People need to step up and take matters into their own hands. The perfect people to get these things started are the student athletes. An athlete’s mind is driven by determination. This determination will not allow them to fail at anything they do. This is why they are the right people to carry out plans like this, because deep down they will want to make it work. Making a difference in the community does not mean that you have to do something drastic. Just volunteering to maybe help at a local soup kitchen could make a difference in a way that not even yourself could understand. It is the little things that count, and if we could get our student athletes all to pitch in something small, these little acts of kindness could bring the entire community together as a whole.

Personally, I have been involved in certain volunteer projects that I have found to be extremely rewarding. I volunteered to be a staff member in the Special Olympics and it changed my view of everything. Volunteering in the community for certain things like this can really open your eyes to the way the world is. I am so grateful that I did it, and it makes me really appreciate the fact that I can go out on a sports field and represent my town. Just like these kids who are mentally challenged, I go one hundred percent in everything I do and seeing them take so much pride in themselves for doing good in something like the Special Olympics, is amazing.

Something as little as volunteering can help to make the community, and yourself, better.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

Katherine Muise  
Saint Mary’s High School (Lynn)

Student-athletes are an important part of the community and therefore can make a difference. Student-athletes create community spirit and relationships. They are excellent role models. The actions of student-athletes and the ripple affects they create are essential to making a difference in the community.

Student-athletes create community spirit among team members and supporters. The community takes pride in their athletes especially when they are winning. Even when teams are on a losing streak, community members still don their jerseys, wave their flags, and paint their faces with the team’s colors. The community unites under a common purpose: to support their team and to hopefully witness a victory.

Being a student-athlete help students to build relationships and other fundamental characteristics. The students build camaraderie and create lifelong friendships between their teammates and their supporters. The supporters also build camaraderie between themselves. The good and the unfair calls by the referee at last Friday night’s football game can be discussed by the attendees while the amazing plays can be described to those who were not able to be present. In these ways, sports are all-inclusive. Even those who try but do not make the team can still participate by taking their place in the stands.

Student-athletes learn and develop their strengths while improving their weaknesses. Trust is essential to nearly all sports. When a flyer is tossed into the air, she must trust her fellow cheerleaders to catch her in order to execute the stunt perfectly. These athletes learn responsibility for themselves and their teammates. The students will carry what they learn and gain through their athletic experiences with them throughout their lives.

Being a role model is a central part of making a difference in the community for student-athletes. Reaction to defeat can “make” or “break” a student-athlete as a role model. Accepting defeat gracefully by not displaying any unsportsmanlike behavior is essential to the image of a role model. Instead, the athletes should train harder and push themselves to their limit. Then, they should return to the battlefield stronger, tougher, and more determined to achieve victory. When this circumstance occurs, the athletes are role models to all through their perseverance.

Older student-athletes can be especially great role models to youth athletes. They can volunteer to coach teams and teach winning strategies. They can share important lessons about being an athlete and about life that they have learned. They can come to games to support and cheer for the players. By observing the youth athletes, they can critique the youths' styles and teach them what and how to improve.

Whether they are winning or losing, the sportsmanship of student-athletes are symbols of pride and hope to the community. Through their actions they build relationships and become role models. They create community spirit and unite the community under common goals. Student-athletes make a difference in the community because they are the best examples of how success can be gained through dedication, hard work, and a little sweat.
Student Athletes Can Make a Difference in the Community
Brian Miles
West Springfield High School

There are many ways that student athletes can make a difference in a community. They can be role models for younger student-athletes, they can provide sports entertainment for the public, and they can join together and provide volunteer services for the community. Just by doing what they enjoy, playing a sport, they can help the community be a better place.

Student-athletes in high school can be great role models for younger student-athletes. They can be good examples of working and training hard to improve their skills in their sports. They can show younger kids how to win and lose with good sportsmanship. Without knowing it, they are teaching younger athletes about teamwork and respect for other players, coaches, and referees.

Sports games and matches provide entertainment for the community. There’s nothing like an exciting high school football game, or basketball playoff game to bring a town’s community of fans together. A little league baseball game, a club soccer game, or a high school tennis match can be a fun thing to do on a weekend.

Student-athletes can also make a difference in the community by joining together and helping others. They can be a strong team of volunteers, holding carwashes to raise money for charity, doing yard work for the elderly, cleaning up litter in parks, and more. The teamwork that they share on the field can be used in helping others.

In many ways, a community can be a better place when it has a student-athlete. The teamwork that is taught to other kids, the fun and excitement of games, and the ability of the students to do volunteer work helping others all make a difference and a better community for everyone.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

Naomi Bledsoe
Greenfield High School

I am a varsity athlete at Greenfield High School, and it upsets me seeing those less fortunate than I suffer. In 2010, my volleyball team and I looked around our community and decided there needed to be change. First, we asked ourselves what needs to be changed and how can we change it? Many of us had already taken part of “The Secret Lair,” a free store for fellow students in need of clothing, school supplies and hygiene products. We organize donated clothing, shoes, dresses and sports apparel along with feminine products, deodorant and other hygienic necessities. Thinking outside of our school, and with winter coming, we found Warm the Children, an organization that is set up, like a store, at a local elementary school, and provides jackets, snow pants, coats, and other garments for free. Our local Sheriff’s department, newspaper and department store raises funds and purchases warm winter clothing. Local agencies such as DCF (Department of Children and Families) and WIC (Women Infants and Children) refer families for a special shopping day. We took part in the setting up and take down process, organizing clothes from infants, to girls and boys toddlers, to adult sizes. Working as a team outside of the gymnasium really brought us closer together. Doing this made us feel like Santa Claus, making families happy and giving to others. The adults that were running the program made us feel valued and appreciated, they were very gracious we were there to help them every step of the way. They expressed to us the importance of the work being done for the children and families and were very thankful for our services. We formed a bond by all sharing the same compassion for wanting to help others and make a difference. We inspired other teams and classes from our school to participate in community service also. We started small with just working at our school and we’re now expanding beyond our town. As a varsity athlete at my high school, taking part in community service not only benefits the people we help but my team and I as a whole, through the hard work. Our team makes this an annual event and looks forward to doing more for our community and making a difference.
The Jerry Fund
Miles Briggs
Lenox Memorial Middle and High School

Football had been Eric’s favorite sport ever since he was a kid and watched it on television and made the team in fourth grade. After his first game, his parents told him that they were going to have a baby. Eric was excited to have a little brother that he could play with and teach how to play football. Nine months later, Eric met his little brother Jerry in the Berkshire Medical center for the first time. When Jerry turned five, Eric started teaching him how to play football and all of the rules. It was the middle of summer, and when it was over, Eric would start his freshman year of high school.

School started and everyone was excited to meet the new teachers that they had heard so much about, but Eric was mainly focused on making the varsity football team. Out of all of the kids on the junior varsity team, Eric was exceptionally better because of how much practice he did outside of the team practices. Eric gave it his all and made the team but was put as a backup quarterback. Everything was going well. Eric had a loving family, he made the varsity team, and he and his little brother got along very well.

The next week, Jerry was hit by a car, and his body was paralyzed from his feet to his waist. Jerry had to go to the Hospitals children’s center and take physical therapy classes. Eric and his parents felt terrible about what happened. There was not much else left to be done other than pay for the therapy that would take years. The only problem with the sessions was that Eric’s parents weren’t able to pay the fees. Eric knew that he had to do something for his brother and his parents rather than just standing around watching the whole scene play out, so he came up with a plan to raise money.

Eric talked with his team about what he wanted to do, thinking there was only a slim chance that he could get them to agree with him. Usually students would be allowed to go and watch the game for free, but Eric’s plan was for students to bring ten dollars to see the game and the same amount for parents. When Eric explained his family’s situation to the team, they understood and found a new respect for the person Eric was to go out and tell them the way he did. They agreed and got to work putting up posters titled, “The Jerry Fundraiser”, to let people know what the money was for.

At the game, lots of people showed up with their ten dollars to pay for their tickets. Eric was so glad that he had raised the money to support his family by starting the fundraiser. He had made enough money to pay for the sessions, and eventually, the team started raising the money to support other families who needed money to support their children.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Kaitlyn Vasile
Blue Hills Regional Technical School

Student-Athletes, although not seen as playing a big role, can make a big difference in the community. These student-athletes can help in many ways including helping clean the community or even helping tutor other children. Although it may seem like a small project helping clean the community can impact the community in a big way. For example if the student-athletes use their abilities to help clean the community, not only will it get done fast but also more efficiently. The athlete part of the student-athlete would show through while doing this because, although it may not be obvious, the more in shape you are, the easier it would be to clean. This also would be helpful because if a group of student-athletes got together they could think of easier or more efficient ways to perform the task at hand. This would not only help the community get cleaner, but it would also influence the people around them to pitch in to help. This would not necessarily be in the form of physical labor, but could also be in the form of mental help.

The other way student-athletes can make a difference in the community is by helping tutor other children. While this may be in the form of school work or athletics the children will learn a great amount from the student-athlete and most likely turn around and do the same for another child. When student-athletes are helping tutor the children this can make a huge impact in the community. For example the student-athlete will be helping a child in the local community which could lead to endless possibilities including that child who was being tutored turning around and helping the community when they get older. Although these actions of helping clean the community or tutoring children may seem like small, expendable deeds they truly do make a big impact on the community. The student-athletes can apply themselves anywhere in the community and accomplish a great deal, but by the student-athletes working to clean the community and helping tutor other students they can make a big impact and an even bigger difference in the community.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

*Kelvin Severino*

*Lawrence High School*

“LAWRENCE - Both Diaz and Hernandez were shot in the head execution-style about 12:55 a.m., making them the city's seventh and eighth murder victims this year.” Eagle Tribune Newspaper, October 29, 2011. Lawrence may not be the fairytale place you might dream of living in. All too often we are on Fox 25 news or in the local paper for robbery, murder, or bad press in general. Yet many student athletes that roam the halls of Lawrence High School are good examples for everyone else and really want to change the city. It’s nice when you see the Lawrence High wrestling team on Fox 25 for winning the State Championship for a change. When you see athletes on the newspapers for being more then athletes, for being an example for their community and representing where they are from in a positive way, that is what makes all the effort really worth it.

Making a difference in the community is more than what is on the TV or in the newspaper. It’s about what goes on behind the scenes. A lot of student athletes serve as mentors for the youth of this city. We go out to the middle schools and talk to them about what it is to be part of a team and how they need to help out the community. We are a positive symbol of our community. It is up to rebuild Lawrence. We lead by example.

“A good objective of leadership is to help those who are doing poorly to do well and to help those who are doing well to do even better,” A businessman named Jim Rohn. Not many kids do well in our city. Many struggle to keep their grades up and have chaos in their home life. Many live in poverty and don’t have someone to help them. Student athletes here try to help those around us overcome these issues. We offer each other our time and support. We are here to help as much as anyone else.

On a breezy Friday football night we had a game against Andover. A teammate of ours came up short on a play and everyone was putting the blame on him. I noticed how much this bad chemistry affected us as a team. As the captain, I felt it necessary to remind them about discipline and unity. If one of us fails, we all fail. As a team we realized that united we shall stand and divided we shall fall. We took this off the field with us. After games and practices we all return to the same place, our community. It’s not right to point fingers in our community and blame others. We all need the discipline to step up as one and things better.

Many of our students have no father, no older brother, and no one to lean on. We need to be examples for each other. We are there for one another and fill that void in our community. We are creating our own community.

A community isn’t changed overnight. A community is changed person by person. It begins with one human being. As student athletes in Lawrence we want to make a difference by affecting students one by one. With time the youth of our community will be older and lead this community down a different path. Our youth is our future and this is how we will make a difference. The lessons and plays we learn on the field become the plays we call in real life.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

Allison LeBel
Holliston High School

In today's society athletics is a major part of life. The impact that sports, especially athletes have on society is very powerful. As role models in the community, we realize that we have a unique opportunity to inspire today's youth to achieve things they might not have originally thought possible. We have a great impact on our communities as student-athletes. It's fun and exciting for student-athletes to be involved in different projects within the community where we can make a difference.

I am involved in many sports. In each sport my team is involved in helping out our community in many ways. Grass Root Soccer: “Kick AIDS” Fight, Holliston Autism Walk, CF Cycle for Life, Millis Beautification Day, Relay For Life, Lion's Club Senior Citizen Dinner, Special Olympics, Best Buddies and reading to elementary students. This past summer I had the opportunity to volunteer with other student-athletes along with the community at Glen Echo Park, Glen Echo, Maryland. As a team we came together to rebuild the park. Each person presence made the team a success. The idea of all the individuals on a team working towards a common goal is amazing. With hard work and determination any goal can be accomplished. Seeing the tears of joy in the community eyes was breathtaking. The pride I felt just being part of this was unbelievable.

The values I have learned as a student-athlete are responsibility, leadership, integrity and respect. Each of these values carries over into everyday life. These values make me a better person. We as student-athletes need to lead and support others and our communities. If we can support that influence in a positive way and use it to develop both the student-athletes and the community then you have something that is very compelling. We are taught to stand up for what is right and how our decisions impact each other. So let's stand up and work together in our communities and help each other. We as student-athletes can make a difference.
I feel that there are several ways that a student can be an asset to the community. A beneficial student-athlete is someone who not only uses his athletic gifts for him or herself but someone who gives back to the community. There are several ways in which a student athlete can give back to his/her community. A student-athlete is also someone who can be a role model for their peers and be a positive asset to his or her school environment.

Some ways that a student-athlete can give back to their community is by participating in events within their town. For example, during baseball season I volunteered along with other members of my baseball team to come to the school on a Saturday and walk the perimeter and clean up any trash on the school ground. Doing activities such as this shows not only your fellow classmates but other people in your community as well that you care for the town and the town can benefit from having you as a member of the community. Goldie Chaney once said; “It only takes one person to make a change.” If you make a positive impact on your community then more people will follow your lead which in effect makes your community a better place to live.

Another role that a student-athlete must play in his community is being a role model to his or her peers. If an ordinary student sees a student-athlete being successful in both sports and academics it may give that student an incentive to try harder in school and be successful. This mentality and drive of doing well in school will soon rub off on other students within your school community enabling it to be a better and more educationally advanced environment.

Being a student-athlete can possess a lot of positive power within you community and school. It is up to the student-athlete to use this power to make his or her environment beneficial to all. If a student-athlete can do this successfully then they have done well not only for their school but also for their community.
The holiday season is just around the corner, and families will begin to purchase lots of different foods and gifts for their loved ones. This can be the best and worst time of the year for many people. For most, it is not a problem to head to the local supermarket and buy the necessary items to prepare a large meal for the entire family. For some, however, it is an on-going struggle. With the poor condition of the economy, especially this time of year, the number of people who need support from food pantries is continuing to rise. Last month alone the Hanson Food Pantry serviced one hundred and twenty families.

There are many ways that student-athletes can participate to help their community. Whether it is assisting the elderly, or taking a day to clean up the park, it is a positive activity to contribute to.

A fun way to help the community as well as build team spirit would be a friendly competition between the sports team in our high school. There would be a contest to see which team could collect the greatest number of canned goods and non-perishable items. The group that collects the most would win a prize. Perhaps a “Panther Trophy” with their sport team and year engraved on it. They would have bragging rights for the year, but more importantly they would learn the value of helping others. The name of the competition would be “Panthers Can” to demonstrate that the sports teams “can” succeed on the field and succeed in a “can” drive.

All the items would be donated to the local food pantries to help stock their bare shelves at this crucial time of the year. We have a large number of student athletes, and if everyone participates it would be extremely successful. The little things add up and will make a huge difference. The athletes would be assisting their community and have a memorable time in the process!
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Delaney McWalters

Millbury Memorial Jr/Sr High School

Being a student athlete is about much more than just playing sports in high school. Being a student athlete in high school, I have quickly learned that I have responsibilities to myself and to my community. Community outreach is a huge part of playing sports, and I attempt to do so through helping others because it is what directly reflects the mentality of athletes like myself on and off the field.

The media make outreach into something that goes in and out of fashion like last year’s pair of shoes. Outreach and volunteering in the community is simply about helping other people. Helping other people as a student athlete may mean doing a Special Olympics event with children with mentally or physically damaging diseases. It may mean having a ‘pasta party’ at the local homeless shelter. Helping people is the easiest and best gift you can give to the community.

Breast cancer is something we’ve all heard of, if not had a firsthand experience with. It is the most common form of cancer in women, which is why when I heard my grandmother was diagnosed with it, I was not shocked. She was eighty five years old. Her body fought its battle with cancer, but in May of 2009 she passed away. It was, and continues to be the hardest time in my life. It’s hard to move on.

Two years and three months later, I made the varsity volleyball team for the second year. October, as many people know, is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. My volleyball team and I decided we should do something to support the cause. We went to our local hair salon and got pink hair extensions put in our hair, as the money spent on the hair pieces goes directly to breast cancer research. We were also asked to participate in one of our neighboring school’s “Dig Pink” game, a volleyball game that donates proceeds to raise money for breast cancer research through friendly competition.

This effort that my volleyball team has made to support the cause of breast cancer research has made me realize that people really do care, and in a way doing small things like that help me to move on from my grandmother’s death. This is the goal of student-athlete community outreach; to take a tragedy that has happened to you and turn it into a positive effort that betters the world as a whole. This can be done through helping others.

My grandmother would have loved to come to my “Dig Pink” volleyball game, or to even just see the person I’ve become. Every day I try to carry on the lessons she taught me by being the best student athlete I can be, through helping others. Making a difference in the community is something every student athlete should strive for, because without it we’re just kids playing games. I wish to strive for something more in my life, even if it is just making part of my hair pink.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

Peter Le
Bishop Connolly High School

Student-Athletes can make a monumental difference in the community. I remember when I played youth soccer, Catholic Youth Organization basketball, and little league baseball as a little kid. I used to always look forward to practices and games because it was a chance for me to get out of my house, play sports, and just have fun with my friends. When my brother was in high school, I would always watch his soccer, basketball, and lacrosse games. These high school athletes were my idols, even though they did not even know me, and I could not wait to play sports in high school. I looked up to these athletes, both figuratively and literally since I have always been short, and was always inspired by their work ethic and skills.

Here I am as a high school senior who has now become the idol for little kids to look up to for inspiration. It is surreal to look back and realize how fast time has passed. These kids need mentors to help them not just in athletics, but more importantly in leading them towards the right direction in life. I have decided to step up to the plate and make a difference in the lives of these kids. I have been a soccer referee for the past four years where I have taught kids the basic rules of the world’s most beautiful game. It is awesome to be able to teach kids the sport that I loved as a child. Some of these kids simply have very little sports knowledge and to have the opportunity to see the smile on their faces when they play soccer is something I will never forget.

I decided to make an even greater commitment to giving back to my community by becoming a youth soccer coach. This was the first time in my life I would stand on the sideline as a coach rather than a referee or player. The season is already coming to an end and I have had the time of my life coaching these kids. It has been fun to be able to step back from the stress that comes with being a high school student and simply spend time with kids that simply want to have fun. They are always amazed when I tell them some of my soccer stories I have experienced over the years.

The most important lesson I have taught these kids is that having fun is much more important than the final score. I always tell them that in five years, nobody will remember the score of a certain game nor who scored in which games. What people will remember are the great memories that they had while simply having fun playing soccer. Student-athletes are well respected by kids that simply want to reach their greatest athletic potential. It is such a basic activity to become a coach, yet it is an activity that can really help kids stay on the right track in life.
Making a Difference in the Community
Tamara Kuzmenko
Chicopee High School

Coming from Ukraine, my parents always say, “Why are you wasting your time with volleyball and tennis? It takes up too much of your time.. blah..blah” But they don’t understand the importance of student athletes and their impact in the community.

In our community, not everyone has the motivation to work out at home or go to the gym. Therefore playing a sport is something a student enjoys doing while staying fully committed to “working out” every day. Athletics keep your body active every day so you will stay in shape and good health. Our community will be more fit and healthier as a whole.

The greatest feeling of unity is when you are about to serve the ball or you just look up at your fans and see the whole community gathered together to support you. Each student athlete has different family and friends. Therefore when each of the player’s supporters comes to watch, the community condoes together. People might not find this important but where would we be in this world without getting to know new people within our communities?

There are many sports and teams within one school and when each team goes out into the community and serves the people, it makes a huge difference. For example, last spring our tennis team went out to Szt Park and cleaned all of the trash up around the park. Also we participate in the Rays of Hope walk. The team bonds so much as a family that we go out into our communities as one to make an impact.

Overall, student athletes learn many crucial factors to forming a strong character through playing a sport. You learn commitment, working together with people you like and maybe not like, perseverance, time-management, and humility. These characteristics allow you to succeed in the community with other things. Our communities would not be the same without having student athletes.
Student-Athletes Making a Difference in Their Community

Jacob Elkins
Holyoke High School

The best way a student-athlete can give back to the community is being a good role model to young athletes. All the younger athletes are our building blocks of how sports in our community will turn out. Younger athletes always want to be like all the older athletes, saying that they want to be a football player like their older brother or a basketball player like their older sister. Showing them how to be a good teammate towards your opponent and your own team will lead them to do the same when they join a team. Little things like helping someone up if they go down in a game, or saying good game at the end. This really effects our younger generation to push themselves to become a better athlete. Wherever you are, on or off the field, young athletes are everywhere watching. Like when you see a really good player at the mall or on the streets, watching and wanting to be just like you when they get older.

Not too long ago, Holyoke High School's Boys Varsity Soccer hosted a clinic to help the coaches of the Holyoke Youth Soccer League and for all the young players. The first clinic helped the coaches learn how to train their team to get better. Fun drills to stay in shape and other drills to work on their ball control, team work and the fundamentals of soccer. Not only did it help the coaches learn better ways to teach soccer but also showed them how to get the young kids to work together as a team.

A week or two after, the boys and girls soccer team helped in hosting a clinic for 6-12 year old young athletes. Arriving at the field seeing about 60-70 little faces eager to learn something new, really made you feel good about yourself because you were going to be teaching them the things you learned. Knowing that you’re helping someone out with something new is one of the best feelings, because now they are going to look at you as a role model. Step by step showing them how to juggle the ball right to staying active and moving around with fun little drills really put a smile on every child’s face. Towards the end each player paired up with a couple of young players and worked one on one with them teaching new techniques and encouraging them to keep trying and never to give up. It wasn’t too long until the end of the clinic arrived and watching all the kids run around thanking all the players that helped them.

In every little way of showing kindness and teamwork from helping another player or encouraging those to do better really made a difference to the Holyoke Youth Soccer community. As the years go by, those little athletes that were positively influenced will be making a difference to other young athletes in their community. They will be passing on the thoughtfulness of helping one another.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

Katherine Lynch
Norwood Senior High School

All my life I have been a student/athlete. While maintaining all A’s in school, I have played every sport ranging from organized soccer, basketball, and lacrosse to playing baseball and football in the backyard with my siblings and skim boarding and surfing at the beach in the summer. I have travelled all over New England, going as far north as Canada, to play soccer competitively year round. My desire to play sports throughout the last ten years has enabled me to gain many skills and develop certain strengths that I can apply and use to help make a difference in my community.

Every year my family and I take part in the Pancreatic Cancer Research Walk at Castle Island in honor of my uncle who died from pancreatic cancer. To help raise money, I held a bake sale at school using the leadership skills I have learned through sports. I was able to know what needed to be done and who needed to do what in order for it to run smoothly and be a success. I was able to accomplish something that was important to me and hopefully help someone someday.

Last Spring I helped coach a U7 soccer team while I was not yet cleared for sports from a concussion. It took a lot of patience and understanding to work with high-energy seven year olds. I had to stay disciplined and calm, even when they were the complete opposite. If I didn’t play sports and I wasn’t an athlete, I probably would not have had the experience to be helpful to the head coach. Playing high pressured soccer games has shown me to think clearly and strategically in the most chaotic circumstances, especially with 12 seven year old children on a field.

Each Christmas season, my family and I participate in an organization called My Brother’s Keeper, which provides presents to families who otherwise wouldn’t be able to afford them. This organization depends on people like me and my family in order to make sure that every person on their list is able to open Christmas presents. My commitment to go every year whenever I can, whether on a weekend or a day off from school, also comes from many years of playing sports. I have learned how valuable commitments are and realize how much certain people depend on them. This is a very important value to me.

Without sports, the only thing I would have would be my school work. My parents have always made sure that I put school first. Maintaining all A’s while participating in sports everyday has taught me how to balance commitments and work well with others. I have learned how to accept feedback, take direction, and stay calm under any circumstance. All of these skills will help me when I participate in Christmas in the City in December or work at a shelter for women through my religious education program. I hope to set an example that will inspire younger children to work hard at school and sports, and use their gifts and talents to help others in their communities.
“This disease is caused by a defective recessive gene which causes the body to produce abnormally thick mucus. This mucus builds up in the breathing passages of the lungs making breathing difficult and in the pancreas, the organ that helps to break down and absorb food.”

Fact after fact, slide after slide. The hands on the clock barely moved, class was taking forever. My hand tried to scribble down every little word that came out of my freshman biology teacher’s mouth. Sequences of nucleotide bases and DNA strands filled my brain. All of the information seemed too much to grasp at the time, but boy was I in for a shock.

“She has cystic fibrosis.” My mind wandered, perplexed with what I had just been told. Where had I heard of that disease before? Had I read about it in books, heard of it on television? Think, think. Then it hit me like a train screeching off the tracks; of course, from biology class.

In my sophomore year of high school a new member of the family was welcomed. My uncle and aunt adopted a precious little girl, Sarah. Little did they know she was a carrier and possessed the genetic disorder known as cystic fibrosis. It hit my family hard. None of us knew what to expect; no one really knew much about the disease. I learned more and more about the disorder from my JV softball coach Ryann Clark, who happens to be an important role model and mentor in my life. She personally had been greatly affected by cystic fibrosis. Her best friend Colleen was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis and lost a long and hard fought battle to the disorder at such a young age. Knowing Colleen suffered her whole life due to cystic fibrosis and now Sarah would have to deal with the same pain was a terrible thought to realize. I wanted to help some way somehow.

I then discovered a walk called “Great Strides”. It couldn’t have been a more perfect way to get people involved. I talked to my head softball coach about the walk; she was all for it. During one of my practices I called all of my teammates together. I told them about cystic fibrosis, about my cousin, and about the walk. Sure they all agreed to participate, but no one knew how moving the walk would actually be.

On May 22nd, 2011, my Varsity softball team along with the two other teams in the Billerica High School softball program participated in the “Great Strides – Taking Steps to Cure Cystic Fibrosis” 5K walk. I walked alongside the members of my team, as well as my aunt and my baby cousin. After the walk the girls realized how much taking the time to raise money and participate meant to Coach Clark and I. The softball program fundraised over $1,500 for CF, as well as spread awareness throughout. Small steps can have a huge impact in a community.
Student-Athlete Influence on Community
Jessica Scozzari
Mashpee High School

You know that overtaking feeling you get when a team member scores a goal, or a football player catches an amazing throw? You feel accomplished and proud to be a part of the team, or proud to call that your school team. Student athletes are a positive influence on the community. By being a student athlete it provides an opportunity to become a well-rounded person.

A huge part of being a well-rounded person concerns, the burden that all student athletes hold, time management. To be a student athlete you must juggle your schedule of work, school, sports, and a social life. Student athletes must always adhere to their priorities. School comes before sports. Respect comes before winning and good sportsmanship comes before being a star athlete.

Second of all student athletes represent their town every time they step on to the field, the court, or the track. Athletes must respect their opponents. The school team must always come home from a game, whether it be a win or a loss, with a positive attitude. Student athletes are role models to peers, young children, siblings, and the society. They must always put their best effort into every game, and be proud of the team.

Along the responsible path of being a student athlete you will learn life lessons and skills. Athletes have to be responsible and try to always put their team before themselves. This means attending practice, supporting the team, and respecting the coach and other players. Student athletes will learn to make beneficial choices to stay part of the team. All in all athletes learn to work well with others, respect people, being accountable, and being part of a team.

These life lesson skills learned through sports can be used in school and throughout the community. Student athletes can use what they learned and respect the community and spread a positive influence to peers and their fans. Playing a sport can be a heavy burden but never forget what wealth you are spreading to the community.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

Jake Mountain
West Springfield High School

All student athletes have the ability and responsibility to make a difference in their community, but not many do. Athletes can do all types of community service, be it helping out with in town sports, volunteering their time at a charity, or just serving as a good role model. With the busy schedule of a student athlete, it can seem like there is never any time for community service or helping in the area where you live. However, it is the responsibility of student athletes to better their community in some way, shape or form.

Many kids, either in high school or younger, look up to sports players in their town and aspire to be like them. This means that athletes have a responsibility to serve as good role models to younger kids. A student athlete doesn’t need to be perfect, just a moral person who a kid can strive to be like. If a kid grows up aspiring to be like an honest, nice kid, he’ll probably end up being an honest, nice kid.

One of the easiest and most beneficial things a student athlete can do for their community is to volunteer their time with the youth programs for their sport. This does a lot to improve the sports programs in your town as well as your team’s image. Things like a youth clinic held by your team or a few high school athletes helping out at a training session make a big difference in both your community and your community’s perception of you.

Volunteering at any local charity is a great way to make an impact on the lives of others as well as garner good publicity for your program. Charity effort is guaranteed to benefit people who need it most, and it makes a huge difference in a community if an entire team, an entire program, were to all help out for one cause. Fund-raising doesn’t always need to be to get things for your team either! You can raise money for relief from a recent natural disaster or for a cause such as breast cancer. Community oriented fun-raisers would also do a lot to make your community a better place for more people. A canned food drive or similar events could do a lot to better the area you live in.

The betterment of the community should be something every student athlete partakes in, whether it’s serving food at a shelter or providing their neighbor in elementary school someone to look up to.
Can Everyone Be a Team Player AND Help Out in the Community
Kaitlyn Boehm
St. Joseph Central High School

Ever since I started high school, I have always noticed one particular thing about trying to be a “team player.” That of course, to the surprise of many, can have different meanings to certain people. I joined St. Joseph High School when I was only in eighth grade, and I was immediately intimidated by the large groups of people practically begging me to join a sport. But like most people, I decided not to join that year, and waited until I was a freshman to try and fully understand what it takes to be committed to a particular team. Now after three years of participating in varsity sports, I have a complete understanding to the quality sportsmanship has on not just your performance on the field, but also in your school work and in your community.

When a player steps off the field, court, or any other area where they spend most of their time practicing, one can easily behave in a way they would not during the game. But helping out in the community is practically just like a game if the key values are compared. You are there as a team, you need to work together, but most importantly people helping all have an important goal, which is to make a difference and succeed. Can one person alone win a soccer game against the impending odds against them? The answer is not likely, because to win you need a team. The same is for volunteering for a cause, you cannot fully succeed without a strong team guiding and helping you throughout your time.

In recent times, many people have come to disvalue the help that teenagers can do to their community. With all the outside forces pressuring and breaking us apart, it is hard to explain why some may take the path of drugs or violence and continue on with it in their lives. But most of these people have never had a strong backbone to help them out with their hardships. That is what a team does. A team not only prevents a future of trouble, but can also prove to people that teens such as me aren’t all trying to get into trouble. By helping out through a volunteer program, we can show how we all provide the balance that helps out not just others, but each other as well. They can show how we value others who aren’t as fortunate, and share the sense of being a family to them as well.

So how can student-athletes make a difference in the community? It is simple, and starts with not only making bonds, but sharing them as well. All you need is a strong base and a sense of teamwork, and anything can be accomplished. And by proving that to society, we can provide a better future not just for others, but ourselves as well.
Sharing Ideas as a Team
Rooby Fortulien
Community Academy of Science and Health

When I was in Haiti, and I was 14 or 15 years old, I lived with my dad and cousin. I always woke up at 6:00 AM just to go to school early to play soccer. School started at 7:45. It was a lot of fun for me as a kid to play soccer every morning, even though the ball I used wasn’t a real soccer ball, it was a ball I had made out of rags and tape. I didn’t have the money to get a ball and my school director didn’t think sports were necessary for the school. Everyone enjoyed seeing me play anyway. I started my own team and we practiced over and over. We played matches against the other grades. The director even attended a game. She still didn’t want to make promises about initiating sports the school. One day, I got together a group of students and met with the director to advocate for our cause. She started to recognize that it was not fair to the students to have a school without sports. After some days, she started looking for a coach.

Finally, the director found one. After only a week and a half, we entered our first competition. We lost early in the game because the players hearts were pounding – we weren’t in good enough physical condition to compete. As time went on, we started practicing every day and planning as a team. Every player gave his opinions about how to motivate the team for the next match. We even decided to travel to compete. We trained and competed non-stop, and soon the director and the coach started to have faith in us because we won almost all of our games.

I thought a lot about the needs of our whole team. I asked the coach to have a game between our school and a rival school to raise money to build a soccer field. We sold tickets, and we raised a lot of money because everybody came to support us. I was amazed to see all the students come together as a team to support their school.

The coach made me captain of the team because I had gotten the whole school interested in sports. Sports had helped our community develop discipline, teamwork, and school pride. When I got my visa letter and found that I was arriving to the U. S. A, the director, the coach and the students told me they’d miss me because I had done great things for the school. They gave me a medal before I left. When I see this medal hanging in my room, I remember how important it is to be a leader, share your ideas, and build a team. That’s why I continue to play and encourage other athletes.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Rachel Grabar
Wilmington High School

Going into freshman year
I played nothing and had a fear
That I would make no friends at all,
And stand alone in the empty halls.

Until the day of sport sign up’s
I was grabbed by a girl and cheered right up.
She wanted me to tryout for varsity soccer
So I made my way to buy a new locker.

I put on my cleats, shorts, and socks
Ran out the door, not glimpsing at the clock
I made it just in time before the whistle blew
Tryouts started and I made it through!

I joined the team as starting forward
And made friends who were kind and supportive

One day my team and I came together
Not concerned about the time or weather
To plant flowers in the center of town
To give back for what I have found.

Being on a team made me see
That giving back to my community
is as easy as 1, 2, 3.

Twenty four is better than one
So coming together is so much fun.
The activities we do and the help we provide
will show kids that giving back can be worldwide.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

Jumana Dahleh

Lexington High School

Someone who makes a difference is a person who goes the extra mile to help out others, and to teach them life long lessons. In some communities there is no one better to make a difference than a respected student athlete. The younger students in a community look up to high school students. They can use this to their advantage when making a difference.

My interaction with high school student athletes in my community started 7 years ago, when my family moved to Lexington. All my brother and I wanted to do was fit in; the way to do that seemed to be through ice hockey. The first time I went to the rink I was at the impressionable age of eight. After watching 10 minutes of the game I knew that ice hockey was the sport for me, the only thing left to do was learn how to play. I started going to the learn to skate program run by coaches and high school players every Saturday morning. To my disbelief the high school athletes were there every Saturday ready to help out in any way they could. They were there purely to share the love of the game. After my first season of hockey I became obsessed with the sport. My mother and I would go to the local high school girl’s games and I would joke with her by saying “I’m going to make the high school team as a freshman.” All I wanted to do was be one of the girls that I looked up to. They were always giving back by having fundraisers and working for local charities.

A short 6 years later I was a freshman at Lexington high school and like most freshman I was terrified. In the winter of my freshman year hockey tryouts rolled around, and to my surprise I made varsity. After making the team I couldn’t have been happier. Than my thoughts turned to panic because now I have little girls looking up to me, the way I had to previous players. This thought scared me no end. I didn’t think I would be able to fill the shoes of the players before me who helped out the community in many important ways. The daunting task of giving back what you have received was going to be challenging but I knew that the first place to start was the place were I started. I went back to the learn to skate clinic; this time I was a teacher not a student. I was able to pass down the traits and wisdom of the game that I learned from former student athletes and from years of playing.

In my opinion the only way to effectively make a difference is through something you love to do. So whatever sport you play the best way to give back as a student athlete is by teaching the younger generation and getting them excited about sports.
So We Play

Caroline Harrington
Wellesley High School

I imagine him waking up - Choking on air
His extremities are limp from paralysis - His body is failing him

I see his family crying - His clock is ticking down
Putting on strong smiles - They care for him

I watch his team, filled with sadness - Their guide, their mentor
Is suffering - They are stricken with confusion

I cannot understand - I cannot find answers
I cannot make things right

But I can act

Because what else can I do?
I’m not going to be the passive girl - Filled with regrets

In honor of a man, However brief his role in our family was
He made an impact on our community - He helped to make our program great

And so we played for him

32 minutes of a beautiful game - Boys and girls
Varsity and Jvers - We played for him

One family- One team
One community - We played for him

Though his time is short - He will never be forgotten

And when I’m down - I’ll always remember
We played for him.

And we always will.

This poem is dedicated to a man that was diagnosed with ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig’s disease. He was the Boys’ Junior Varsity basketball coach during the 2010-2011 season. His name is Coach Seaver. Though my time knowing him was short, I will never forget him. He was a part of my basketball family. Sadly, our charity basketball game probably will not result in a cure for this horrible disease. However, our entire basketball community—from elementary school CYO kids to Varsity Boys’ and Girls’ programs—was united for the love of the game, and for the sake of a great man. We acted together. We played together.
The Pan Mass Challenge, a 163 mile charity bike ride which raises money for the Dana Farber Cancer Institute and the Jimmy Fund, was to begin in two hours. I awoke early on an August morning to remember I was soon to be glued to a bike seat for two long days. The months prior to this morning were filled with fund raising efforts and abundant training sessions. Bake sales at school, countless emails to family and friends, and a charity poker night had helped me to meet my fund raising goals. Physically, I felt prepared; I had been running and weight training since the spring, and believed I knew what was coming.

Sooner than I could imagine I was standing at the start of the race in Wellesley. I strapped on my helmet and mounted my bike. Glancing over at my friend Sophie and the rest of Team Deb, I realized how easy we were to pick out of a crowd due to the large red roses protruding from our helmets.

Team Deb, as we proudly called ourselves, was to honor Sophie’s mom, Debbie Rose, who had died from brain cancer four years ago. Debbie, a second mother to me, was constantly on my mind as I rode.

Supporters lined every mile of our course. Their gratitude was seen in the smiles that stretched ear to ear and heard by the claps and cheers they provided. Those strangers on the edge of the road made all the difference, especially when mile 80 approached, bringing with it an incline lasting about half a mile. Their support also came with sprays of cold water when the 80 degree weather fought to bring us down. When my legs protested, the signs that read, “Thanks to you, I turned 14 years old“ gave me vigor to keep moving.

I rode alongside bikers who wore shirts emblazoned with a picture of a child, husband, wife, or friend who lost a battle similar to Debbie’s. All the riders we met had the unbelievable ability to be encouraging regardless of their exhaustion and the weight they carried from their own loses. The energy I felt from those around me was infectious. Pedaling up the incredible hills that mark the path to the Cape, it was a comfort to know that this was a task I would never have to do alone.

Riding through the finish line I was overwhelmed with a feeling of accomplishment. The hills I struggled against minutes before seemed so negligible now. As Team Deb gathered, I could feel my pain temporarily vanish. Not just the physical aches that would make me cringe with every bump on the bus ride home, but the emotional pain from the loss of Debbie seemed like a lighter load to carry. The people I met and the stories they shared filled me with hope and optimism. 163 miles is not the farthest distance I have travelled, but is by far the most meaningful journey I have taken.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

Tava Hoag  
Clinton High School

Athletes in any culture are like heroes or heroines they provide people with common figures of importance uniting them under one single interest, sports. In my opinion student-athletes are capable of accomplishing anything in a community because they have perseverance, are role models and have dedication to their team and themselves. With these qualities they become invincible ready to take on any challenge and astonish all.

Any athlete learns perseverance at a young age, they become accustomed to overcoming obstacles each and every time they practice their sport. Out in the community this demeanor would not change in the slightest. There is no doubt that an athlete would throw themselves into a project, which benefits others, with vigor and compassion. They can and will work diligently refusing to give up until their dreams are met before their eyes. Challenges and hardships are everywhere in our lives and the fact that athletes at a young age can overcome them is amazing and will further gain support and interest from those around them making them feel as if they can do anything too and adding support in the community.

Athletes are go-getters they don’t sit on the sidelines waiting for a miracle they dive in and make that miracle happen. Their self-motivation will grab others attention and make it hard not to listen and notice them. People already look up to and aspire to be like their favorite athletes. It will be no different as they stand up for a cause and try to make a difference in the community. I am an athlete myself and when I was younger I can remember looking up to the older girls and thinking that I wanted to be just like them. They were my role models and now that I am their age I have become a role model without even realizing it. It’s an endless cycle that all athletes pass through but it sets standards and gives children a foundation and an outlook on the way they want to see themselves as they grow older, to me it’s the greatest gift that an athlete can give.

Dedication is essential to succeeding in anything. In athletics your team is like your family. You dedicate yourself to them and together you grow and learn becoming closer until the ties that surround you are unbreakable. Student-athletes will make the community seem like a family. They will become close knit and stronger as a whole because of this and will push one another to achieve their goals. People will do anything for their family and the community should be treated like one. We need more figures that will take the initiative and spark interest in helping the community and student-athletes are the answer. Their talent and good hearts are evident and their behavior is contagious. Student-athletes will have everyone in their grasp, ready to stand up together and make the impossible happen.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

Meghan McCarthy
Saint Mary’s High School (Lynn)

Millions of students in the United States belong to athletic teams and organizations. This number is so great that with little effort, these millions could make a huge difference in the community. While sports are said to be character building, it is the responsibility of coaches and others in charge to further this building by extending it to the whole community. Providing the opportunity for community service is essential to mentoring youth, it gives them a chance to help others, a chance they might already be looking for.

It can be intimidating for students to go out looking for chances to do community service on their own, and therefore having organizations like school and sports provide these opportunities can encourage those who normally wouldn’t do service. Opening students up to the idea of community service with the team can also encourage them to do it themselves. Giving them the experience can inspire them to do more good, and allow the service to spread beyond the team. However, this encouragement should also be backed by mandatory service. It would be beneficial to both the community and the athletes if they were required to do service. Those in charge should realize their responsibility to lead the team beyond the confines of the game.

Once athletes are incited to do service, there are numerous ways they can go about it. One major thing is to donate their old equipment to charity. Donating is good because it not only gives those less fortunate the ability to have their own gear, but it is also recycling. Most teams also raise funds for their own benefit, and giving some of those profits to charity would be very beneficial. They could even do work for the sole purpose of raising funds for charity, without any money going to the team. It is often a good idea to have the students pick a charity that they really care about, which motivates them to work harder to help. Having their own “cause” to support can allow student-athletes to recognize what all their hard work is for.

Students can also volunteer their time. Numerous athletes can mean numerous volunteers, and that can really make a difference in charitable organizations. Volunteering in soup kitchens, nursing homes, animal shelters and other places are all things that students can do that help those around them. Student-athletes have unlimited chances to help the community, and they really only lack the motivation to do it. Any student can find the means to help others, but what they really need is someone to lead them. The best way for students to make a difference is to do any charity work they are able to and encourage others to join them.
Win, Win, Win
Rachel Silk
Lowell High School

I strongly believe that high school sport teams should be active in community service. Throughout my four years at high school, I have participated in various community service activities of which most were sport related. Most recently my girl’s soccer team held a Breast Cancer Awareness senior night, to raise money and support for Lowell General Hospital Breast Cancer Awareness organization. We played in pink Lowell uniforms and also sold shirts to our friends and families and ended up raising approximately 1,000 dollars.

Athletes that contribute to community service experience a win, win, win situation. First, the idea of raising money and support for an organization such as the Breast Cancer Awareness fund makes me feel very proud of my team and myself for doing such a good thing for our society. It also gives our school a very good reputation and we are happy to do such a good thing for a cause. Next, being a senior captain on my soccer team, I find myself to be a role model to the underclassmen of my team. My hopes are that they look up to me, and see themselves organizing similar community service projects in the future. A few weeks ago, another community service act our team was involved in was visiting a local elementary school for a pep rally. As we entered the gym to give demonstrations of our sport and to talk to the kids, all their faces lit up like we were superstars. The fact that we are looked up to in our society gives me the desire to achieve even more. Community service within a team setting creates a chance for team bonding. Believe it or not, but not many sport teams are close off the field. However, my soccer team is one of the few who has a strong bond due to the activities we are involved in. On and off the field, the Lowell High school girl’s soccer team is a close, well-rounded group of girls who are driven to win. Therefore, when it comes to participating in service activities, we are focused on achieving a goal to reach, and the Breast Cancer Awareness night, we certainly exceed our goal.

Although I am graduating in the spring, I will not stop supporting as many community service projects as possible through our sport program. Raising support for such a good cause sincerely puts a smile on my face and my fellow team members. Also, being a role model is very important to me; I am a leader therefore I am driven to set my followers in the right direction. All in all, athletes who involve themselves in community service activities realize victories unlike any they have experienced on the field.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

Kayla Mangan
Everett High School

Student athletes represent their schools in a positive way, and by doing so they have a great effect on the community. They represent their schools by behaving, following all rules and policies, and doing well in school. This is expected of student athletes, because they are held at a higher standard in order to be able to participate in school sports. Therefore it sets a standard for anyone who wants to become an athlete; the standards make student athletes role models. Athletes are often looked up to, so if they’re setting good examples, most likely there will be people who follow them. For instance, if a student sees that a football player, whom they admire, is very respectful and follows rules, they will probably think that it’s a good idea. Student athletes can inspire others to become a part of a team or even just change their ways. A lot of the time, sports events brings communities together. For some people it may be one of the only things they have to look forward to. Also, many people change their ways, because they know that’s what it takes to be on a team. Kids sacrifice the bad aspects of their lives; such as any bad habits or addictions because they have a love for a certain sport. When you join a sport team you have to forget about everything else going on in your life for that time you are obligated to dedicate to your team. Essentially, sports and sporting events can play a big role in getting kids off the streets and giving them a better life.

Student athletes create a certain atmosphere that brings pride and joy to the community. It gives the community something to believe in and hope for. This also makes for another way student athletes affect their community, because if a team wins, the mood of everyone in that community is a lot happier, but if they lose, people tend to be down and more depressed. The sense of pride created by good student athletes gives pride to everyone else in the surrounding community. There is also the spirit of the sports and its athletes. Parades and pep rallies bring out the spirit of the community and the excitement of whatever is next. This all leads back to the student athletes. They’re really the ones who spark all of this kind of life in the community. They are the ones who have to step up, to set good examples for themselves and for others. They have to lead the path for everyone else to follow. Plus, their events and their participation draw people from the community together to share these different events. Overall, student athletes have a great effect on the community, in a positive way.
Student Athletes and Their Communities
Maggie Johnson
Martha’s Vineyard Regional High School

Since I was young, sports have been my passion. I started playing ice hockey in kindergarten and am now a senior in high school. Since I can remember I have been going to the rink at all hours of the day and night, playing my hardest, and representing my community. I have played hockey alongside the same group of girls since I was in seventh grade and we know how fortunate we are to have had these experiences. It is because of this that me made it our team’s goal to enrich the lives of younger girls in our community.

The Girl’s Youth Ice Hockey Team on Martha’s Vineyard has been slowly waning. The number of girls interested in playing hockey has been so low that the fate of the team has been in jeopardy. Two years ago, in a conversation with my team this issue was brought up. We all found it troubling because we couldn’t imagine our lives without hockey. We talked about the fact that we were brought up as both players and people in that program and it would break all of our hearts to see it end. It was then, that we knew we had to do something about it. Since then, every winter our team sends a group of girls into all the elementary schools. When this day comes we all return to our own elementary schools and talk to the girls that used to be us. We tell the girls how much fun we have playing hockey. We tell them about the friends we have made, the lessons we have learned, and we fill them in on all the benefits of playing hockey. Though we are there to keep this program alive, our biggest goal is to somehow allow these girls to have the opportunity to have an experience that we have all taken so much from.

Through my years at the Martha’s Vineyard High School I have participated in Varsity ice, and field hockey. This Year I am the captain of both and plan to keep this outreach program alive long after I leave. When we go and talk to the girls we try to express to them what sports can do for them and how they can benefit both physically and socially form the experience. During my time in high school I have participated in many different community oriented fundraisers and activities, we have done everything from can drives to Alzheimer’s walks. Although I hope that all of these helped, and had an impact on our community, I feel that talking to these girls has the greatest impact. To me this is the most important kind of community involvement a sports team can have. Our goal is to keep a program that is near and dear to us alive but also, and more importantly, to change the lives of girls in our community. We aim to get them involved in sports that can impact them as much they have impacted us. This truly is the most important type of service student athletes can give back to their community.
Student Athletes in the Community

Jake Dacosta
Dartmouth High School

Student athletes can do a number of things in the community to make it better. For starters the more people in the community that play sports, and get involved, the better the high school experience for those people. I would know because last year I took one season off from sports and was bored out of my mind. Then the next season I did a sport and I had a blast. The student athletes can also make a difference in the classroom as well as on the field and be a model student.

Just being a part of a team is important and it will help people to make new friends. Being an athlete can also benefit your work ethic and competitive spirit translating into better grades. There is a kid I know named Chris who had roughly a 4.0 in school and played football throughout high school. He was able to balance sports with really hard advanced courses and managed to excel in both. If I’m not mistaken I think he went on to Harvard. This type of story is an inspiration to me and I’m sure to others showing you can be both a good athlete and a good student.

The point is sports can better you in many ways and to play sports with great sportsmanship is to play these sports to the fullest having the best time possible. A winning team can really bring a community together and give everyone involved a sense of pride. People look up to athletes and want to root them on. This is true with high school and college athletes and into the pros. Sportsmanship demonstrated by the professionals starts at a young age and you can bet when that pro athlete was in high school he or she made a difference in the community. These athletes could have studied hard played hard and been a role model for not only young players but young students. Of course there are exceptions to every rule and not every pro athlete was a scholar and a great person but I think for the most part great athletes can, should, and are good people. Also when a particular team excels and the town roots for them and they win games and bring some recognition to their town or high school it can really make the community better off.

Lessons learned on the field or the court, or the course can apply to life. Try hard, compete, play fair and you will excel at a sport, a class or a job. You can take pride when you give it your all and you will be a winner no matter what the score!
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

Shawn MacNeill
Uxbridge High School

Student-athletes can make a huge difference in the community just by doing simple tasks. Student-Athletes can join together with other athletes or student-athletes and form a group to help people become physically fit. They can make a group that helps people that have trouble keeping up with things like a yard or house work. Student-athletes can help out with an event that raises money for the community or an organization. Student-athletes can deliver bags to houses and later pick them up and bring them to a food pantry or something of the sort. They can volunteer their time in a soup kitchen and serve the needy and the hungry. Student-athletes can also create a place where people in the community grow healthy vegetables and the like to eat. Growing a garden gives people the people in the community the chance to eat healthy. They can walk or run with people in the community to motivate people to become more active. Student-athletes can work as a team and show team spirit to set a good example and to motivate younger and older kids to work as a team. Student-athletes can make a gigantic difference in the community.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Betsy Maysonet
Madison Park Technical/Vocational High School

A student athlete is not just a student who plays a sport and nothing more we have so much to give and show the community and others, I believe that student athletes make a big difference in the community in many ways not because they show their skills on the court or the field. They also show their appreciation towards the community by helping and doing community service for their school. I believe that student athletes have a lot in them that people don’t know such as leadership, commitment, dedication and responsibility to themselves, their teammates, and their school community. As a student athlete I can truly say that we handle our business in school. We also bring pride and respect to our school through athletics we act as peer leaders to our fellow students by leading by example.

Some of us go out and do community service helping clean the streets, or participate in giving out water when there is a marathon, or going to middle schools teaching them different skills. In my personal experience I can truly say that there are things we do, most people do not notice besides out coaches and a chosen few. Most of us have outstanding grades and do so much in addition to sports that we should notice. We make a difference because most kids that do sports have a reason why they do them; such as being a perspective colligate athlete. Some do sports to stay off the streets, be in good environment, the reason I believe it makes a difference in the community as well is because too many young people are being killed and get pulled into the violence and never get to focus on something more positive for themselves.

We make a difference in the community by being young adults who are mature and have a bright future ahead and providing leadership we act as role models to our peers. As a student athlete I believe we have a lot to give to the community, we help with projects that are for a good cause, and we prove why we are more than just student athletes. Being an athlete can help you physically and mentally. Therefore as a student athlete I represent us all because of all the great things that we do, it will continue on because we have mentored younger student athletes to follow in our footsteps to keep it going to show that we do make a difference in the community.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?

Caitlin Murray
Attleboro High School

As a varsity swimmer about to enter their fourth season of swimming I know how hard it is to be a student-athlete, and when you add in community service, its a juggling act. Throughout the last six years I’ve shared my gift of being an athlete, to being a unified partner. A unified partner is someone who competes with special needs kids in the Special Olympics. Its no different than being on a high school team except you really learn the meaning of team work. To me that’s the best type of community service, doing what you love and helping others at the same time.

It's an amazing feeling when you’re working hard at practices with your team and finally at state games it all pays off, and even when if your team doesn’t win, the smiles and the good time is worth it all. I think every school or town should have a unified team for every sport, and have all the athletes help because nothing would be better than having the town’s local stars helping in the special Olympics. And if everyone played the feeling the special needs kids would get would be amazing. I love seeing my teammates and the halls and asking about practice and games, everyone else does it so why should it be different with special needs students?

I know what you’re thinking, “This sounds fun I want to do this but my town doesn’t have a team.” then start one! It would be a lot easier then you think to get athletes and partners. Have your own team do it! Every sport is offered and no one is excluded!

So why shouldn’t a student-athlete play on a unified team? It’s doing what you love and helping out the community too! Make a difference and cause a smile, you'll never know what you’re missing until you try it.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Bryana Ingersoll
Greater Lowell Technical High School

Every community, small or large needs role models and what better role models are there than student athletes. These young individuals have a mindset greater than any other because it takes a lot to keep busy but stay focused at the same time. They need to keep their priorities in order but always be ready to give a helping hand whether it’s setting up help centers or just leading kids in the right direction.

First off I know that student athletes can bring a lot to the table. This is because if we want to keep playing on a team our grades need to be kept up as well. If not, we can no longer be a part of that team. Especially varsity players are the ones that are always being looked up to and if we are not doing our very best then that just reflects’ poorly on our teachers and coaches. We need to come together and spread our responsibility with others so they can see the importance of involvement. I think that everyone needs a leader or somebody to look up to and most of the times its people who are involved and want to guide and help others. Athletes are those types of people, we are always looking to pump people up and make them feel better about themselves.

In this world today everyone is so busy with school, work, and running errands. People tend to just eat at fast food chain restaurants so that they speed things up and get back to what needs to get done. Studies show that America is becoming the unhealthiest country due to laziness and over eating. In my honest opinion I think that the athletes in each community should come together and raise the awareness of obesity. We as athletes keep ourselves in shape by giving our all in what we do and we think that others should stop playing video games and eating chips and start being a part of their school and/or community as well. It’s so much better when you feel a part of something. When you’re successful at being active it’s a proud feeling.

Last I would like to talk about unity. Joining a sports team as a freshman makes you keep playing and you become very close to your teammates. Most people like meeting new friends in your community. You learn to work with one another as well as lean on one another. You find trust in them and its always great to know you have people there that care about you and want you to do just as good as them. A community can really learn from sports teams because they need to work together too.

So as you can see Team players have a very large impact on a community because they can tech you about working together and needing each other to move forward. Nobody really looks at the importance of working together because everyone is looking to be independent. Independence can be great but its facts that thing get done quicker and more efficient when people work as one.
How Can Student-Athletes Make a Difference in the Community?
Brooke Jameson
Bedford High School

For nine years I have been a competitive swimmer. In swimming and school, I have always been taught to persevere and do my best, even when times are tough. Now, I have realized I need to bring that motivation to aspects of my life outside of sports and education. My sister, my friend, and I recently decided to form a group called TeenAid. TeenAid is a student-run group designed to help local families and groups in need. To kick off our charity work, we held a clothing drive for the Lazarus House in Lawrence, MA. Clothes would be donated and sold to low income families. We ended up collecting over six hundred articles of clothing. I believe that TeenAid has a lot of potential to help people in need. Founding TeenAid has led me to realize that people are willing to help others if you provide them with an opportunity. We plan to have a toy drive around Christmas time, and are excited to find new causes and charities to donate to. Student-athletes work hard to achieve good grades, and they work hard at sports practices to reach their goals. But student-athlete should also set a goal to help others and make a difference in their community. TeenAid is one way that I make a difference. How do you?
Acknowledgments

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Andover High School
Arlington High School
Attleboro High School
Bedford High School
Billerica Memorial High School
Bishop Connolly High School
Bishop Feehan High School
Blackstone-Millville Regional High School
Blue Hills Regional Technical School
Boston Latin Academy
Brockton High School
Cambridge Rindge & Latin School
Chicopee High School
Clinton High School
Community Academy of Science and Health
Dartmouth High School
Doherty Memorial High School
Dover-Sherborn High School
Everett High School
Greater Lowell Technical High School
Green Academy
Greenfield High School
Hingham High School
Holliston High School
Holyoke High School
Lawrence High School
Lenox Memorial Middle and High School
Lexington High School
Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School
Lowell High School
Lynn Classical High School
Madison Park Technical/Vocational High School
Mahar Regional School
Martha’s Vineyard Regional High School
Mashpee High School
Milford High School
Millbury Memorial Jr/Sr High School
Millis High School
Mount Alvernia High School
Mount Greylock Regional High School
Narragansett Regional High School
Norton High School
Norwood Senior High School
Notre Dame Academy (Hingham)
Pentucket Regional High School
Plymouth South High School
Reading Memorial High School
Saint Joseph Central High School
Saint Mary’s High School (Lynn)
Sharon High School
Silver Lake Regional High School
Somerset Berkley Regional High School
Somerville High School
Sturgis Charter School
Uxbridge High School
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