



Today's Scholar-Athletes ~ Tomorrow's Leaders

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Patriot League SAACs Make A Difference

Student-athletes get into the holiday spirit with community service projects.

Center Valley, Pa. – The holiday season is a time to give and receive. Many Patriot League student-athletes recognize the needs of those less fortunate and dedicate their time to giving back to the community. The athletic departments at Patriot League institutions rallied the efforts of its student-athletes this past fall and winter, primarily through the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC), in order to help those in need.

American's SAAC paired up with the Children's National Medical Center of Washington, D.C. and Dr. Bear®'s Toy Closet for their winter season community service project. Throughout the winter season, American student-athletes will collect new toys and monetary donations at all home events until mid-February. The SAAC will use the proceeds to purchase new toys for Dr. Bear®'s Toy Closet. In late February, all student-athletes are invited to help the SAAC deliver the toys and host a fun-filled afternoon session of arts and crafts for the children.

Thanksgiving was the focus at Bucknell, where the baseball team put together baskets and the men's basketball team served Thanksgiving dinner at the Donald Heiter House to underprivileged families. As a whole, Bucknell's SAAC conducts a reading and rewards program for two neighboring elementary schools throughout the year. Children who perform well in school get to have lunch with a student-athlete and play with him or her at recess. Also, the men's lacrosse and softball teams ran a clothing drive this past semester.

At Colgate, the men's ice hockey team collected more than 200 toys and over \$150 as part of its first holiday toy drive to benefit needy families in Madison County. The Raiders collected the toys as part of a charity raffle at two of their home games. The collected toys were donated to the Interfaith Council Holiday Project, where the men's ice hockey team helped in wrapping the gifts. The cash donations were used to purchase clothing and food for the families.

Numerous Holy Cross teams took part in the annual UMass Walk for Cancer this past September. The money raised by the Crusaders will be used to support research at the newly built UMass Memorial Cancer Center in Worcester, Mass.

The Lafayette SAAC participated in a program called Helping Hands, in which each varsity team sponsored an individual family. The student-athletes received a paper mitten that had a wish list of presents and purchased those items. For example, one of the mittens the volleyball team selected was for a young woman who had just moved into a new home. The team purchased kitchen towels, including decorative Christmas towels, and clothing.

Lehigh also reached out to families in need during the holiday season through its annual Adopt-A-Family program. Each athletic team adopted an underprivileged family and raised money throughout the fall semester so they could purchase presents in time for the holiday season. The athletic department and the adopted families came together one evening earlier this month to open presents and visit with Santa, while sharing in holiday snacks.

"Today's Scholar-Athletes, Tomorrow's Leaders" – The Patriot League continually demonstrates that student-athletes can excel at both academics and athletics without sacrificing its high standards. The Patriot League's athletic success is achieved while its member institutions remain committed to its founding principle of admitting and graduating student-athletes that are academically representative of their class. Participation in athletics at Patriot League institutions is viewed as an important component of a well-rounded education.

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