



Friday, April 2, 2004

Student-athletes give back to the community

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

When Sherie MacGregor was organizing a walking club program at Brewster Elementary School in Rochester Hills, she called Oakland University swimming and diving coach Pete Hovland for help. For eight weeks beginning last October, student-athletes from OU's men's and women's swimming and diving teams helped support the program by inspiring and motivating Brewster students to make walking part of their life.

"I called Pete because he was a former coach of mine in the Oakland Live Y'ers (a Rochester-based swim club)," MacGregor said. "The best thing about the Brewster Walks program was having guest walkers with the kids, including the OU swimmers. They helped us record the kids' mileage as they walked around the track, cheered the kids on, walked with them and served as role models. They made the program fun. The younger kids were very interested in learning more about OU and the swim team. Rain or shine, the swimmers were there and were very dependable. We'd love to have them back when we resume the program this spring."

The Brewster Walks program is just one of the many ways in which OU student-athletes are giving back to the community. Other examples of recent community service projects include:

- In February, members of the softball team read to students at Webster Elementary School in Pontiac and socialized with seniors at nursing homes in Auburn Hills and Bloomfield Hills. In April, the team will play games with mentally and physically impaired children.
- Men's and women's cross country team members helped work the aid station at last October's Detroit Free Press Marathon.
- During last fall's "Make a Difference Day," members of OU's baseball, softball, women's basketball, and men's and women's golf teams participated in a campus cleanup event.
- Student-athletes from OU's baseball, dance, men's soccer, and men's and women's basketball, golf and swimming and diving teams participated in last fall's American Heart Association Metro Detroit American Heart Walk to raise funds to fight heart disease and stroke.
- Members of the volleyball team currently are spending Saturday mornings packing lunches and sorting donated clothing for the poor and homeless at St. Leo's Church and Soup Kitchen in Detroit.

As much as the student-athletes enjoy helping others in the community, they also find volunteerism personally rewarding.

"All of the people at St. Leo's are very grateful for our help," said junior elementary education major Heather Lippert, a volleyball team member. "We usually get about 200 people at the soup kitchen on a Saturday. They thank us and are very happy to have a nice warm meal and clothes. It feels good to see people who have nothing or very little appreciate the things we often take for granted."

OU's athletics coaches also understand the importance of volunteerism, and encourage their student-athletes to contribute by becoming involved.

"It's important that all of the OU athletics teams reach out to the community as much as possible," said softball coach Mike Tomlinson. "We're a community-based university with a lot of students who live in the surrounding community, so it's important that we give back."

"Some of my players will have an opportunity to move on to professional baseball after they graduate, and

volunteering provides a way for them to give to others who are less fortunate,” said baseball coach Mark Avery. “It also lets our players know how gifted and lucky they are. Several of our players worked with members of the basketball teams during the Special Olympics. They told me afterwards how much fun it was. They were excited and felt rewarded by giving back. Our Athletics Department goes out of its way to do a lot for the community. Hopefully we instill a trend in our student-athletes that will continue long after they graduate.”

Visit the **Center for Student Activities** Web site to learn more about personal and professional development opportunities by volunteering. To learn more about OU's 14 Division I varsity sports teams, visit the **OU Athletics** Web site.

SUMMARY

When a walking club program was being organized at Brewster Elementary School in Rochester Hills, OU swimming and diving coach Pete Hovland was called for help. His team supported the program by inspiring and motivating children to make walking a part of their life, which is just one of the many ways OU student-athletes are giving back to the community.

Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Friday, April 2, 2004

Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Friday, April 2, 2004

Article Start Date: Wednesday, April 7, 2004