

Non-profits awarded with help from Carolina Hurricanes

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By David Droschak

When Doug Warf took over nearly a decade ago as executive director of the Kids 'N Community Foundation -- the non-profit arm of the NHL Carolina Hurricanes -- he admits he had a snapshot of the Triangle that wasn't necessarily accurate.

"I've always thought of our area as being very affluent, with a lot of college graduates and a good bit of wealth," Warf said. "So, it's easy for folks to overlook the problems in our community. There are a lot of non-profits out there who fill in the gaps. It's awesome to be able to help them."

Since the start of the charitable foundation in 1997, over \$12.5 million in cash has been awarded to non-profit organizations that focus on enhancing the lives of youth in the local North Carolina community. This includes \$572,000 during the 2014-15 fiscal year which ended June 30, Warf said.

Several years ago, Warf and the foundation's executives decided to "get a little more strategic" with its grant money, implementing a tier system, that at the top level included its high-impact grants called GOAL (Growing Opportunities And Leaders). The GOAL grants allow for two \$150,000 gifts each year to deserving non-profit organizations.

Each organization goes through a process that includes an RFP and live presentation in front of the foundation's board of directors. This year, two Raleigh-based non-profits have been chosen: Transitions LifeCare and Durham Nativity School. The 2015 GOAL grants recipients will be awarded checks by Warf in late November.

"Easily the best part of my job, without a doubt," Warf said of the check presentations. "I think it's the best part of pro sports. For a lot of the groups that we deal with the recognition of being associated with the Carolina Hurricanes can be more valuable than the financial donation. And there is nothing more heartwarming than seeing how the money helps these groups that are providing a million services for our community."

Warf said the Transitions LifeCare grant money will help start in-home hospice for terminally ill children, a service that was lacking in Raleigh.

"You hope no one you know ever has to go through it, but unfortunately we were a rather large metropolitan city without palliative care for children," Warf said. "Charlotte has a program, Wilmington has a program, and Greensboro has a program but Raleigh did not."

“The Carolina Hurricanes GOAL award will make a huge difference for children and families struggling with life-changing or terminal illnesses,” said John Thoma, CEO of Transitions LifeCare. “Transitions Kids, our children’s hospice program, was developed to provide home-based care for the child and family. The GOAL grant will fill a gap in services by enabling kids and their families to receive expert medical care and supportive services in their home and community.”

Transitions LifeCare expects to seed 30-40 kids a year with the foundation grant, Warf said.

Meanwhile, Warf called Durham Nativity School “the best hidden gem in the Triangle from a non-profit standpoint.”



The middle school has a perfect high school graduation rate with teens from low to middle class families who often “fall through the cracks.” Many of its former students have also gone on to secure college degrees with the help of the school’s counselors.

“Durham Nativity just produces model citizens,” Warf said. “It is heavy on educational, but also on community service and health. All the kids are in shirts and ties, they’ve been taught how to greet an adult, how to shake hands, how to make eye contact. In addition to the top-notch education, they teach a lot of life lessons, but what they found was they needed to reach kids earlier.”

Durham Nativity currently has grades 6, 7 and 8. The GOAL grant will help start a 5th grade.

“The recent gift is yet another example of how the Carolina Hurricanes are transforming lives of young people through education and character development,” said Brendan Moylan, whose family founded the Durham-based middle school. “When a young man and their family join the Durham Nativity School they are provided the platform to reach goals that may seem out of their reach, like a college education. The generosity and investment of the Carolina Hurricanes puts that goal within reach.”

Speaking of goals, Warf says he would like to donate a record \$600,000 for the foundation in 2015-16. He has gotten close each of the last two years. This will come with the help of the Hurricanes players who are active in an annual golf tournament, alumni game weekends, and autographed silent auction items.

“It’s a little bit of an aggressive goal but I feel it’s reachable,” Warf said. “And I always remember without the players participating in our major fundraisers none of this would be possible. They are the draw.”



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