

## LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD

# Pagnozzi Helps Kids Step Up To Plate

## SCHOLARSHIPS GIVE CHILDREN OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY SPORTS

By Tammy W. Tucker

THE MORNING NEWS • TTUCKER@NWAONLINE.NET

**SPRINGDALE** — Registration fees. Bats. Gloves. Uniforms. Cleats.

The costs for children to play recreational sports, such as baseball, mount quickly. But parents just trying to make ends meet don't have to stress out about buying sports equipment or paying for lessons.

The Pagnozzi Charities Youth Sports Scholarship Program provides financial assistance to disadvantaged children in kindergarten through eighth grade in Arkansas, mostly in the Northwest region. Scholarships are provided for a variety of sports, including baseball, football, basketball, soccer, softball and gymnastics.

In addition, the program helps parents pay for sports camps, lessons and monthly instructional programs and offers tickets for families to attend Razorback games.

"We have the coolest job in the world," said Missy Shanklin, executive director of Pagnozzi Charities. "We get to play Santa Claus year round."

Pagnozzi Charities gave sports scholarships to Michelle Harris' children for about three years before she started working as youth coordinator for the organization.

"I get to care for others' kids like they cared for mine," she said. "It brings tears to my eyes that I get to do that."

Harris said letting her kids play sports was extremely important to her and her husband. She would feel guilty about not telling her kids that it was time to sign up for soccer or basketball, so the couple would use money allocated for household bills to buy sports equipment.

"We would spend electric money on sports and then have to figure out how to get money for electric," she said. "I didn't know there was a Pagnozzi (Charities). I thought the Boys & Girls Club gave the scholarships."

### 'On The Right Track'

Last year, Pagnozzi Charities



COURTESY PHOTOS

**Tom and Colleen Pagnozzi of Fayetteville** help make sure every child in Northwest Arkansas has the opportunity to play sports.

**"We have the coolest job in the world. We get to play Santa Claus year around."**

MISSY SHANKLIN, Executive director, Pagnozzi Charities

distributed 667 sports scholarships, and many of those kids were referred by Boys & Girls Clubs. Shanklin said the goal is to award 1,200 scholarships this year. Often, those scholarships are given to two or three children in the same family.

"We've seen (the program) grow every year," Shanklin said. "Our impact doubles every year."

Shanklin said studies show that children who play sports perform better in school, are more productive, have higher self-esteem and enhanced social skills. Physical activity also can help lower the childhood obesity rate, which stands at 38 percent in Arkansas, Shanklin said.

And it's a chance for children to meet new friends and find positive mentors.

"The kids we help, sometimes sports are their only normal part

of life," Shanklin said. "Probably half of the kids don't have daddies at home."

Pagnozzi Charities uses the same nationally recognized Department of Human Services income guidelines school systems use for the free/reduced lunch program to establish initial eligibility for scholarships. For example, a family of three makes \$16,090 per year or less to qualify.

"I can't stress how much Pagnozzi Charities does," Harris said. "Without sports there's no motivation. That's what keeps them on the right track. It's motivation to keep their grades up or they can't play."

### 'Pags' Gives Back

Tom Pagnozzi, a Razorbacks catcher who played for the St.



**Tom Pagnozzi**, a catcher for the St. Louis Cardinals from 1987 to 1998, founded Pagnozzi Charities as a way to give back.



**Soccer** is just one of many sports that kids with Pagnozzi Charities scholarships play.

Louis Cardinals from 1987-1998, founded Pagnozzi Charities.

Pagnozzi and former Razorbacks baseball coach Norm DeBriyn conceived the idea as a way for "Pags" to give back to the program that launched his professional career.

It began in 1991 as the Razorback Foundation's Celebrity Golf Tournament and Auction. The event eventually evolved into the



**Pagnozzi Charities** offers scholarships for underprivileged children in kindergarten through eighth grade.



**Golf** can be an expensive sport, but Pagnozzi Charities can help parents with the costs.

Tom Pagnozzi Charity Golf Tournament, Banquet and Sports Memorabilia Auction.

Pagnozzi Charities separated from the Razorback Foundation in 1999 and took on new goals and events as a nonprofit organization.

"We basically started as a Razorback booster for baseball," Shanklin said, "with a few camp scholarships."

### AT A GLANCE

#### PAGNOZZI CHARITIES

To apply for a Pagnozzi Charities Youth Sports Scholarship, call 443-2550 or download an application from the Web site, [www.pagnozzicharities.com](http://www.pagnozzicharities.com) or And Do

Pagnozzi Charities has planned the following events for 2006:

• **May 5-6** — Annual Alumni Reunion. Former players return to Baum Stadium for an exhibition game.

• **May 6** — Pagnozzi Charities/Coca-Cola T-shirt day at Baum Stadium when Arkansas plays Alabama.

• **May 13** — Grand Slam Celebration. Tom Pagnozzi hosts a party for Pagnozzi Charities supporters at his Fayetteville home.

• **May 19** — Pagnozzi Charities will distribute Dave Van Horn bobblehead dolls to the first 1,000 fans at Baum Stadium when Arkansas plays Auburn. The popular Pagnozzi Charities bobblehead dolls have immortalized Norm DeBriyn, Frank Broyles and Tom Pagnozzi.

• **August** — Pagnozzi Charities will partner with Wal-Mart for a glove drive for needy children.

• **Oct. 6-7** — Tom Pagnozzi Charity Golf Tournament, Banquet and Sports Memorabilia Auction. Festivities bring University of Arkansas supporters, coaches, former players and a cast of major leaguers and other professional athletes together for Pagnozzi Charities' largest fund-raiser.

SOURCE: STAFF REPORT

Now, The Pagnozzi Youth Sports Scholarship Program has distributed 1,800 scholarships.

The annual golf tournament and banquet, now in its 15th year, is the biggest fund-raiser for Pagnozzi Charities. In 2005, 288 golfers participated, and the silent and live auctions raised \$60,000.

# Kiwanians Support Children's Health Care

RACE PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT HOSPITAL

By Marla Hinkle

THE MORNING NEWS • MHINKLE@NWAONLINE.NET

**SPRINGDALE** — Like many children, 9 year-old Shelby Sprott had a keepsake image of her handprint taken at her birth. But unlike most children, her print was the size of a small doll.

She was born at 22 weeks. Her sister Rachel was born at 24 weeks.

Both girls received care in September 1996 from Arkansas Children's Hospital, the state's only pediatric medical facility.

"We knew it was there, but never had use for the hospital until the girls were born very premature," said their mother, DeAnn Sprott.

Her experience with the hospital was professional and personal.

"They took excellent care of the girls, but at the same time, they helped take care of us as parents and made sure we understood what was going on, offering support in every way," Sprott said.

"We still keep in touch and stop by to see the doctors. They are always appreciative to see how the children have grown."

The girls' mother described them as normal third-graders at Walker Elementary School in Springdale.

Sprott said she appreciates the Kiwanis' involvement and willingness to give a donation.

"So many people who go to the children's hospital are financially strained, especially in situations where extended medical care is required.

This donation should help ease the burden on those families," Sprott said.

The Sprott twins will be ambassadors at the Northwest Arkansas Kiwanis Walk/Run For Children April 8 at Har-Ber

## Helping Out

The Northwest Arkansas Kiwanis Walk/Run for Children will be April 8 at Har-Ber Meadows in Springdale.

Entry fees are \$15 for pre-registration and \$20 on the race day. Both fees include a T-shirt. Registration will be from 7 to 7:45 a.m. The 5K run begins at 8 a.m. and the 2-mile walk at 8:15 a.m. at Bernice Young Elementary School, 301 Pippin Apple Circle, Har-Ber Meadows.

The Kiwanis Division 19 clubs include Bella Vista, Bentonville, Centerton, Farmington, Fayetteville, Fayetteville/Sequoyah, Gravette, Huntsville, Lincoln, Lowell, Rogers Breakfast, Rogers Noon, Siloam Springs and Springdale.

All proceeds will benefit the Arkansas Children's Hospital. To make a donation, or for any information regarding the Walk for Children, contact Joanna Williams at 751-2330.

Source: Joanna Williams

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Meadows in Springdale.

Kim DuPas, community development coordinator for the Arkansas Children's Hospital, said the money given to them by the Kiwanis clubs will fund the trauma unit.

Last year, the event raised \$18,723, and the goal this year is \$22,000.

"The support from Kiwanis is fantastic. Arkansas Children's Hospital is very proud to have support from the Northwest Arkansas club.

There has been a partnership between us for many years, and they have been a lifeline of support for the children of Arkansas," DuPas said.

Joanna Williams, event coordinator for the Kiwanis Walk for Children, said the Kiwanis Division 19 adopted the walk as its project, first hosting the walk at Bella Vista, Springdale, Siloam Springs, and then back to Springdale for its central location.

When Williams and other members of the Springdale-based Kiwanis group went to the Little Rock Kiwanis Club on an inter-club visit, they decided to take a tour of the Arkansas Children's Hospital.

Walking through the neonatal unit tugged at Williams' emotions. "I saw the most beautiful, teeny-tiny babies you have ever seen,

### FAST FACTS PATIENT NUMBERS

• Last year, there were 9,250 patient visits from Benton, Boone, Carroll, Madison, Newton and Washington counties.

• Helicopter transports from Northwest Arkansas totaled 204.

• \$857,651 in uncompensated care was given to 1,277 Northwest Arkansas patients last year.

SOURCE: ARKANSAS CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

some no larger than my hand."

A benefit for race participants will be to make a difference in children's lives, Williams said. She noted that many Northwest Arkansas residents think children are being served just in the Little Rock area, but many children are helped in their part of the state as well.

Each runner or walker will have a chance to win door prizes, and snacks, fruit and water will be available.

Williams said any donations will be accepted.

"We appreciate all the help anyone could give us. You never know when a member of your family or a friend will need the services of the Arkansas Children's Hospital."



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**A tiny handprint** from the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at the Arkansas Children's Hospital in Little Rock illustrates the size of Shelby Sprott. The Springdale resident was born at 22 weeks gestation, and weighed 1 pound, 3 ounces as a newborn.