

Athletics Community Service



By Zeniya Cooley

College students often reluctantly take part in community service in order to embellish resumes or to appeal to their colleges, but the students and coaches in the Athletics Department at the University of South Carolina Sumter perceive community service quite differently. They passionately look to serve their community.

For the 2017-18 academic year alone, Fire Ant athletics has engaged in over a dozen community service projects, from the Willow Drive Champions Parade, to reading to elementary students, to assisting with Casino Night.

In partnership with the Fire Ant Food Harvest, student athletes helped USC Sumter collect approximately 400 food cans for United Way. University 101 students and the department posted fliers about the food drive in local neighborhoods, and interested people left the food cans on their patios for athletes to pick up, or they dropped them off at the university.

Director of Athletics, Adrienne Cataldo, explained that people want to donate cans but often don't make it to a drop-off location. The athletes make it easy by picking up from their homes.

Another project that athletics generously committed to was Real Men Read. Assistant Director of Athletics Tim Medlin traveled to Alice Drive Elementary to read to students and share a few encouraging words.

Alice Drive Elementary Media Specialist Dana Delavan was delighted to witness Medlin's devotion. "He took time out of his busy baseball schedule to read and tell

these kids how important reading is and how far they can go," Delavan said.

Student athletes, Kristen McKenzie and Blake Robinson, described what community service means to them.

Focusing on the Optimist Club roadside cleanup, McKenzie highlighted the important lesson she and the softball team learned after picking up 27 bags of garbage. "While there are still going to be people who throw trash out the window, the softball team knows that it takes hard work to pick up that trash," she said. "I'll think twice before ever harming the environment like that."

Fire Ant baseball player Blake Robinson added, "Whether it's roadside trash pickup, ringing bells for the Salvation Army, fixing bicycles for kids in need, or helping out at Pop Warner football games, any chance we get we are out helping others in the community."

Other activities Fire Ant athletes took on this year include interacting with students in the Alice Drive special needs class, gaming with patients at Palmetto Health Children's Hospital, volunteering for the TriSumter Triathlon, and volunteering for the athletics golf tournament.

In fall 2017 alone, the baseball team racked up more than 1200 hours of community service. Many people feel that college students are lazy and selfish, and sometimes they are, but this unique group of student athletes at USC Sumter value their community and the chance to return the blessings they have received.