

The E. J. Henderson Youth Foundation is making several moves

Written by Ryan T. Scott

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There is an epidemic of giving in these perilous times, and Minnesota Vikings linebacker E.J. Henderson is leading by establishing multiple youth events and charity causes. On Friday December 19, Henderson, and his brother Erin Henderson, continued their engaged leadership in charity and community involvement. Cub Foods on Broadway hosted the E.J. Henderson Youth Foundation (EJHYF) and its first annual Christmas giving event. The EJHYF, along with Quan Sports Marketing and Comcast Cable, organized the donation of over 50 turkeys to Northside families in need. Visually, the assessment of the number of turkeys seemed to be more like 100. This abundance led to several other deserving families receiving from this holiday blessing.

One of the outstanding elements of the event was the incorporation of the young understudies of the EJHYF. The young men who benefit from the balanced teachings of the foundation joined Henderson to take an active part in this giving. With profound understanding, Henderson said he was simply supporting these young men. "The Northside is their neighborhood, and this event was inspired by them," he said, referring to several of the young men in the group.

Two of the young men, Alphonzo Seals and Andre Abla, said that participating made them feel good about the community and what they were doing in it. "Seeing good stuff like this has made me do more with my school, and the Boys & Girls Club too," said Seals.

"I try to stay after school and to be involved," said Abla.

The example provided by Henderson, along with the experience had by the young men, is the type of effort that results in new leaders and ripple effects throughout the entire community. More of these works can be expected in the future. EJHYF Co-Founder and former Vikings Strength coach Mark Ellis said, "We have now gotten past a lot of the red tape and have developed more infrastructure. The community connections have been made, and our facilities are now where we want them to be. We're especially proud of our new computer lab and tutoring lab. We are also looking forward to establishing an even stronger presence in North Minneapolis"

Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak was on hand, kicking off the event with greetings from the city as he passed out the first turkeys. Cub Foods and Comcast representatives also spoke from the heart about their corporate and personal interests in the strengthening of urban

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communities.

EJHYF understands the power of continuity, and followed-up the Cub Foods event with an event called Kicks for Kids on December 23. This bowling outing at the Park Tavern (St. Louis Park), combined with an athletic shoe giveaway for the young men in their program, was the perfect addition to the EJHYF holiday event schedule. Roughly 50 young men took part in this event, and it was once again encouraging to see Henderson thoroughly involved with the group in a big brother type fashion. It is clear and inspiring to see the genuine effort that Henderson puts forth. The kids represented the Saint Paul Police Activities League (PAL), Urban Ventures and The Vintage Place. In addition to the charity giving, the event allowed these young men to become acquainted with each other before entering their respective programs.

Hope is on the horizon, and the E.J. Henderson Youth Foundation stands in the forefront of many positive causes. This team is waving others to come forward and looks to draw in more youth for teaching and training.