

## Decisions create a “prisoner class” of our young folks

Written by Fred Easter

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Nobody asked me, but, if they had, I wouldn't have been able to offer a sensible rationale for The United Way's decision to withdraw support for youth recreation in our communities.

I have seen what opportunities exist in suburban communities; for kids of all ages. They've gone over the top for their own.

I have four grandchildren who live in Eden Prairie. They are twin boys, 14, and girls 12 and 8. The youngest girl competes in baseball, basketball and swimming. The eldest girl plays baseball, volleyball and basketball. The twins have played football, basketball, baseball and track.

Imagine, two to three coaches per football team from 3rd grade to High School. Game officials decked out like NFL refs. Some games are even played under the lights. Imagine track meets with timing devices for each lane. Imagine 2nd graders coached to perfect four strokes for swimming competitions.

Is it any surprise that Black youngsters are 3 times more likely to die from drowning than their white counterparts?

Some key benefits of youth competition are:

1. The opportunity youngsters would have to develop a positive self image without a gun in their belt.
2. The opportunity young folk would have to develop a respect for rules, teamwork, and properly channeled aggression.
3. The opportunity our community would have to expose our youth to a wide variety of positive mentors.

I am convinced that the way to healthy, engaged youth is through athletics and physical activity. Sports, dance and other performing arts have the capacity to motivate and inspire young people

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and build a community's self esteem as well. Defunding these activities was the first step in creating a “prisoner class” of our young folk.