

Each day brings with it an opportunity to have a positive impact in someone's life. To do so doesn't mean you need to do something big either. Positive vibes and a sense of happiness can be shared simply by saying hello or smiling to those who cross your path during the day. Then there are those opportunities to touch a life that could possibly change the path or road that an individual would travel.



Such an opportunity presented itself to the Board of Salisbury Rowan Runners this month when community mentor for the program “Caring for One Child at a Time,” Horatio Everhart, reached out to SRR to sponsor two young boys in the Rowan County Youth Football League. A unanimous vote awarded these two third graders with a chance to play football – something they have always wanted to do but have not been able to. The \$250 sponsorship provides 9 weeks of play, all the needed gear and uniform plus socks a brand new pair of Nike cleats!

So why is playing football so important? How is this sponsorship making a difference for the better? Numerous studies have shown that one key factor in a young person's resiliency is a supportive, mentoring relationship with a non-related adult. Participating in organized team sports led by nurturing role-models promotes a culture of responsibility and respect – respect for the volunteer coaches; respect for peers; and respect for parents. When kids develop these positive social behavior patterns through sport participation at an early age, these behaviors are more likely to become habits for life.

These habits do not develop automatically through sport participation. Instead, volunteer coaches and adult organizers recognize the potential value of sport participation as a tool for developing kids, and very deliberately focus on maintaining a sport environment that fosters these positive social outcomes. Both Horatio and Coach Keith Neely advised the boys that in order to continue to be part of the team and play, they had to maintain good grades and proper conduct in school.

SRR Board Members, Brooke Taylor and Laurie Ward, were there when the boys were awarded their cleats and told they could play on the team. Kaleek and Desmond Toomer's smiles and excitement were heart-warming. When Kaleek got his shoes, which were white, he promised he would clean them every night after practice. Desmond followed with that fact that he couldn't wait to play because he has never played football before.