2017

DUNEDIN
BLUE JAYS
COMMUNITY
REPORT
Our Mission

The Dunedin Blue Jays are committed to enriching the lives of those in our local community by giving back to organizations who have given us continuous support over the years. Through various community initiatives, we are able to provide opportunities for local charities to generate fundraising dollars, create awareness, and ultimately enjoy a fun day at the ballpark! As a team, we strive to assist those in need by increasing literacy, acting as positive role models, and providing hope, fun, and entertainment to the communities of Dunedin, Pinellas County and the Tampa Bay Area.
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**JAYS OUTREACH**

**2017 COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD**

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*Design and Content: Allasyn Lieneck and Daniel Venn*
BLUE JAYS COMMUNITY TEAM

BY THE NUMBERS

$7,341 in-kind donations
Value of items donated to local charitable causes.

146,035 minutes
Read by students during the Bookin’ It to the Ballpark reading program.

$4,100 in sponsorships
Towards youth baseball, charity events, and local organizations.

$74,545 total value of 2017 donations

$9,239
Funds raised to support education in Pinellas County.

$3,658
Donated toward animal related causes.

$15,203
Donated to support local families.

478+ hours
Volunteered by Blue Jays players and staff.

40+ offsite community events participated in.
AT THE BALLPARK
Each season, the Toronto Blue Jays and Dunedin Blue Jays partner during Major League Spring Training to offer local non-profit organizations the opportunity to raise funds at the ballpark through ticket sales programs, 50/50 raffles, autographed baseball raffles, and group outings.

During Spring Training 2017, $27,888 was raised at Florida Auto Exchange Stadium to benefit charitable organizations operating in the Dunedin area.

Eleven area non-profit groups participated directly during Spring Training, raising $16,710 for their individual causes. The Blue Jays raised an additional $11,178 for local charities by holding 50/50 and autographed baseball raffles on game days that did not have an individual beneficiary, donations for public address announcements, and the sale of scorecards during games.
TRAINING

50/50: $22,819
BALL RAFFLES: $3,250
PUBLIC ADDRESS: $985
SCORE CARDS: $230
TICKET FUNDRAISER: $604

TOTAL: $27,888
In addition to supporting local Little Leagues, the Blue Jays have partnered with Florida Prepaid to offer young baseball and softball players the opportunity to experience professional athletics for themselves through the Baseball Buddies program. Youth sports leagues, birthday parties, camps, and local teams can sign up to take the field with the Dunedin Blue Jays, hear their names announced by the Blue Jays Public Address Announcer, and stand with their favorite Blue Jays players on the field during the National Anthem.
The Blue Jays celebrated D-Jay’s Mascot Mania championship by donning special Mascot Mania uniforms that featured Minor League Baseball’s mascot title belt on the front on July 8th. Following the game, each player’s game worn uniform was autographed and put up for auction to benefit Blue Jays charities.

Following a week of spirited bidding by fans across Blue Jays nation, the game worn jerseys raised a final total of $2,089 dollars for charity.
The Blue Jays hosted their 8th annual Education Day at Florida Auto Exchange Stadium on May 16th, 2017, offering students from across Pinellas County a fun-filled day at the ballpark centered around the promotion of healthy lifestyles on and off the field.

The Blue Jays provided over 1,900 free tickets to students and staff from 15 different area elementary schools and $1,200 to help schools afford the cost of transportation to Education Day 2017.
The Dunedin Blue Jays athletic training staff led a pre-game exercise session for the students in attendance, teaching them how to prepare their bodies for physical activity just like professional athletes do. Dunedin Blue Jays players met and interacted with the students in attendance during a pre-game meet-and-greet and autograph signing.

A variety of local organizations set up interactive exhibits and activities throughout the stadium’s concourse to promote healthy living, eating, and exercise habits.

Concourse exhibit sponsors:
Dunedin Fine Arts Center
Clearwater Marine Aquarium
Crime Stoppers
Dunedin Fire Department
Pinellas County Sheriff’s Office
Dunedin Historical Museum
Huntington Learning Center
Club Sport Kids
North Pinellas YMCA

Following the game, all students in attendance were invited to run the bases on the field at Florida Auto Exchange Stadium.
The Dunedin Blue Jays pride themselves on their support of fellow animal kingdom friends, avian or otherwise. During the 2017 season, the Blue Jays held a pair of Bark In The Park events at Florida Auto Exchange Stadium to benefit local animal rescues, using proceeds from ticket sales, 50/50 raffles, donations, and vendor fees to raise over $3,000.

The Blue Jays held their first Bark In The Park event on April 22nd during their game against the Fort Myers Miracle to benefit the Suncoast Animal League, a non-profit, no-kill, no-time-limit animal welfare agency in Palm Harbor. More than 115 dogs came out to the ballpark to enjoy a ballgame and a variety of doggie-themed activities set up on the concourse by local vendors. During the event, $1,784 was raised for the Suncoast Animal League.

The team’s second Bark In The Park was held on May 13th to benefit the Dunedin Doggie Rescue, a local organization that saves dogs about to be put down in shelters, provides veterinary care and social rehabilitation, and helps place them in forever homes in the area. Seventy five local dogs helped fill the stands and $1,624 was raised.

Birds of a feather flock together and Blue Jays are no exception. When a baby crow was abandoned outside the clubhouse of Florida Auto Exchange Stadium, the team’s players stepped up and adopted the young bird, feeding and protecting it at the stadium. When the baby bird, named Duke by the team, needed more intensive care than the team could provide, the Suncoast Animal League took the bird in and helped nurse him back to health before releasing him at the stadium where he still resides.

To thank them for their efforts, the team donated $250 to the Suncoast Animal League.
$3,658 donated to animal-related causes in 2017.
There is no better way to celebrate Independence Day than with America’s national pastime. Each year the Blue Jays provide local fans with a fun, free, family-friendly 4th of July celebration with their annual Hometown USA event.

Held during the Blue Jays’ July 3rd game against the Daytona Tortugas, over 4,500 fans enjoyed a Blue Jays win, post-game fireworks, and a concert by the Greg Billings Band for free at Florida Auto Exchange Stadium thanks to contributions from the City of Dunedin, Budweiser, and the Blue Jays.

In conjunction with the event, the Blue Jays baseball team took the field wearing special New Era Stars and Stripes caps. The red, white, and blue hats were part of a fundraising and awareness initiative by Minor League teams across America for Welcome Back Veterans, an organization dedicated to addressing the ongoing needs of military personnel and their families. 100 percent of the proceeds from the sale of the hats was donated to Welcome Back Veterans.

The Blue Jays participated in Minor League Baseball’s annual Stars and Stripes fundraiser to benefit Welcome Back Veterans, a charitable organization whose goal is to assist returning veterans with PTSD and job needs.

For their first three home games in July, the Blue Jays team donned special New Era Stars and Stripes hats featuring a red, white, and blue Blue Jays logo. The Blue Jays sold the caps in the stadium’s Jays Shop and at the conclusion of the sale donated 10% of the cost of each hat to Welcome Back Veterans. Across Minor League Baseball, the Stars and Stripes Hats raised over $30,000 to benefit American veterans.
Fourteen local elementary schools participated in the seventh annual Dunedin Blue Jays ‘Bookin’ It To The Ballpark’ Reading Program sponsored by TD Bank in 2017. Recognizing literacy as a key skill necessary for academic achievement, the Blue Jays have encouraged and rewarded local students for reading with their annual reading program since 2011. This year, nearly 500 elementary school students across Pinellas County combined to read for 146,035 minutes during the six-week program. In hours, those totals would equal 2,434 hours of reading, or over 101 full days spent reading by local students.

Participating students tracked their reading on baseball-themed bookmarks provided by the Blue Jays, advancing around the bases of a baseball diamond as they read outside of class to score runs for their class. Students who scored two runs for their class by reading 20 minutes at home eight times were rewarded with a ticket voucher to attend one of two TD Bank Reading Nights at Dunedin Blue Jays games. In total, 640 tickets were redeemed by students.
Dunedin Blue Jays players and mascot DJay visited participating schools during the program to read with and encourage students. Highlights included reading to and with the students, impromptu dance parties with DJay, question and answer sessions, and Spanish language lessons from bilingual Blue Jays players. At the conclusion of the program, the class with the most runs scored in each school won a pizza party.
Pinellas County has over 16,000 Hispanic students, a demographic the Blue Jays strived to reach and support during the 2017 Reading Program. Blue Jays infielder Deiferson Barreto and Kevin Vicuna, both Venezuelans whose first language is Spanish, visited English Language Learning students in local schools to discuss what they have experienced while learning a new language and adapting to a new culture after moving to the United States to pursue their baseball careers. Barreto and Vicuna answered questions from the students, provided advice, read to them in Spanish, and practiced their own English literacy skills.

**Reading Visits:**

April 18: Gulfport Elementary-Josh DeGraaf
April 19: Skycrest Christian Elementary-Josh DeGraaf, Max Pentecost
April 19: Brooker Creek Elementary-Josh DeGraaf, Max Pentecost
April 20: Keswick Christian Elementary-Josh DeGraaf, Ryan Cook
April 20: Admiral Farragut-Josh DeGraaf, Ryan Cook
April 21: Curtis Fundamental Elementary-Connor Eller, Jared Carkuff
April 21: Cypress Woods Elementary-Connor Eller, Jared Carkuff
May 1: Alfred Adler Elementary-Blue Jays Staff
      May 1: Maximo Elementary-Blue Jays Staff
May 2: Cornerstone Christian-Josh DeGraaf, Andrew Guillotte
May 2: Lake St. George Elementary-Josh DeGraaf, Andrew Guillotte
May 3: Bardmoor Elementary-Connor Eller, Deiferson Barreto, Kevin Vicuna
May 3: Garrison Jones Elementary-Connor Eller, Deiferson Barreto, Kevin Vicuna
May 4: Dunedin Elementary-Owen Spiwak, Deiferson Barreto, Kevin Vicuna
We LOVE Reading

To the Blue Jays!

All about reading! to Blue Jays from Arizona

Love Blue Jay!!!

Dunedin Blue Jays rock!

Made with love by Mrs. Miller's 3rd Grade Class at Messmer.
The 2017 Dunedin Blue Jays baseball camp, held July 12-14 at Florida Auto Exchange Stadium, provided 62 local youth baseball players with professional instruction from Dunedin Blue Jays players and coaches in a fun and safe environment on all facets of the game of baseball.

The Dunedin Blue Jays athletic trainer Shawn McDermott and strength coach Ryan Maedel began each day of camp with a stretching routine and agility training session with the campers. Blue Jays players Conor Fisk, Juan Kelly, Michael De La Cruz, J.C. Cardenas, Josh Almonte, and Connor Panas led drills and offered instruction on pitching, hitting, and fielding. Coaches John Schneider, Corey Hart, and Michel Abreu taught baseball strategy and gave advice on becoming a great ballplayer on and off the field.
Campers utilized all of Florida Auto Exchange Stadium, including the playing field, two practice fields, bullpen, and batting cage during the three days of camp. On the final day, the young athletes put what they had learned to the test by participating in a scrimmage. A healthy lunch was provided for the boys and girls in attendance each day and the camp participants were recognized on the field before the Blue Jays game on July 18th in a special pre-game ceremony.

**QUOTES FROM CAMP:**
(Actual responses from parent surveys)

“My son enjoyed the camp tremendously. It was his favorite part of the summer. He really enjoyed working with the players and coaches and to see a professional facility and field. The entire experience was positive!”

“He loved his time at camp every day. It was well organized, covering all aspects of the game. There was nice interactions with the instructors.”

“My son really enjoyed his time at camp. He loved everything about it and really appreciated all of the time and energy that the coaches put in. He learned a lot and had so much fun. There was nothing that he considered negative at all.”
The Dunedin Blue Jays Fourth Annual Charity Bowling Tournament sponsored by Achieva Credit Union brought 250 local baseball fans together at Maple Lanes Countryside in Clearwater on Saturday, July 29th for an afternoon of bowling, prizes, great food, and charitable giving.

The event raised

$12,820

for Ronald McDonald House Charities of Tampa Bay.
All 40 lanes at the bowling alley were completely sold out and participants enjoyed two games of bowling, lunch catered by Banquet Masters and served by Blue Jays players, the opportunity to meet and greet the entire Dunedin Blue Jays team, and tickets to that evening’s Blue Jays game. $4,500 of the event’s final total was raised by the participants of the tournament, each contributing $25 to attend.

In addition, the fans in attendance contributed over $2,400 through the event’s silent auction, which included autographed memorabilia and apparel from teams throughout the Toronto organization and packages donated by local businesses.

Great prizes were on the line for the best bowlers at the tournament. The top scorers in a variety of categories received bowling pins signed by the entire Dunedin Blue Jays team. The best overall bowlers at the end of the tournament took home custom Dunedin Blue Jays bowling balls autographed by the team.

In four years, the Blue Jays Charity Bowling Tournament has raised over $35,000 to support the well-being of local families through Ronald McDonald House Charities.
Thank You 2017 Sponsors!

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Brown & Brown Insurance
Charles Gehring Photography
Clarion
Dunedin Refrigeration
Dunedin Smokehouse
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Williams Entertainment
Many Blue Jays stars would credit their local Little League programs for helping to instill the love for the game of baseball in them that led them to professional careers in the game. Each season, the Blue Jays kick off their community calendar by visiting District 12 Little Leagues to support and inspire young athletes across Pinellas County. Blue Jays staff and mascot DJay helped welcome baseball back for another season at eight local locations in 2017.

The Blue Jays are committed to ensuring that children across Pinellas County continue to have the opportunity to participate in youth baseball programs. This year, the Blue Jays provided $2,750 in scholarships to help fund Little League and youth baseball programs across Pinellas county.

In addition, the Blue Jays helped local youth baseball programs raise $4,371 through Spring Training game day fundraisers and donated over 350 hours of field availability throughout the year.
The 2017 Blue Jays gained internet notoriety for their pre-game coloring club, but they did their best work with paint brushes during the team’s annual charity pottery painting at Art from the Heart Café. To support the team’s fourth annual charity bowling tournament, Blue Jays players Josh DeGraaf, Connor Panas, Dan Lietz, Zach Jackson, Juan Kelly, and Ryan Cook took over the downtown Dunedin art studio to paint pottery to be raffled at the event to benefit the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Tampa Bay.

At the Bowling Tournament on July 29th, the players took over the microphone to pitch their artwork to the fans in attendance and helped raise $499 through a series of Opportunity To Win raffles with their pottery.
On August 3rd, battery mates Josh DeGraaf and Ryan Hissey joined Blue Jays staff at Walmart to support the Here We Grow Foundation of Dunedin, a local non-profit dedicated to meeting the needs, both social and economic, of families and children in disadvantaged communities in Pinellas County. With a budget of $315, the two players filled their shopping carts with school supplies, clothing, and toys to be donated to local families preparing for the new school year through Here We Grow.
Josh DeGraaf, this time joined by fellow pitcher Ryan Cook, was at it again a few weeks later for the Blue Jays annual Toys for Tots shopping spree. With over $1,000 to spend at Toys”R”Us, the pair purchased a pile of toys and gifts that will be given to boys and girls in Pinellas County during the upcoming holiday season through Toys For Tots. The Blue Jays front office staff will join Toys for Tots this off-season to help distribute the toys and gifts to local families.
Enjoying a game of baseball at Florida Auto Exchange Stadium is always fun for the whole family. However, being outdoors in Florida’s mid-summer heat can pose risks for fans of all ages if sun safety precautions are not taken. To help inform fans of how they can stay safe in the sun, the Blue Jays joined Minor League Baseball and the American Cancer Society in the Cover Your Bases Sun Safety Initiative.

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the U.S. despite being one of the most preventable forms of cancer. Through the Cover Your Bases initiative, the Blue Jays helped raise awareness for sun safety at the ballpark on June 30th. Fans arriving at the stadium received free sunscreen at the gates provided by BullFrog, free skin health screenings were available by BayCare throughout the game on the concourse, and fans learned easy ways to be healthy in the sun and prevent skin cancer through public address announcements during the game.

In Florida’s climate, skin care is a year-round endeavor. To help keep fans safe throughout the season, the Blue Jays make sunscreen available to fans for free at the customer service booth at the stadium on game days throughout Spring Training and the Florida State League season.
The Blue Jays joined minor league teams across the nation in participation in the 2017 BUSH’s Baked Beans Canned Food Drive by inviting the Dunedin Cares Food Pantry to the ballpark for three games in July to collect donations of food and money to help feed Dunedin families in need. Since 2015, Dunedin Cares has distributed over 85,000 pounds of food to over 6,500 members of our local community.

Fans who brought a non-perishable food item to the ballpark between July 29th and July 31st were rewarded with an exclusive Blue Jays tumbler. During the three day drive, over 100 pounds of food and over $100 in monetary contributions was collected for Dunedin Cares.

Following their thrilling championship victory in September, the 2017 Blue Jays team united in the clubhouse for the final time to clean out their lockers and pack their bags for the off-season. As they said their goodbyes, the team chose to end their season together with a final community service project, collecting their used equipment from the year to be donated to help young ballplayers in need.

The equipment donated by the players will be given to the non-profit Helping Kids Round First, an organization that supports the growth of youth baseball and softball in poverty-stricken areas around the globe through equipment donations, coaching and instruction, and support for basic healthcare, sustainable agriculture, and education.
FAN APPRECIATION NIGHT
During the final weekend of the regular season, the Blue Jays thanked their fans for their continued support of Blue Jays baseball with a night dedicated to fans at the ballpark. The team held their annual team garage sale and donated all proceeds to hurricane relief efforts. The first 300 fans through the gate took home a mystery bobblehead, and Dunedin legend Dalton Pompey was in attendance to throw out the first pitch.

ORANGE FESTIVAL
The Blue Jays are committed to supporting the local community and joined numerous local businesses at the Dunedin Orange Festival in July, an annual fundraiser to support the Dunedin Historical Museum and the Dunedin Chamber Foundation.

ISLAND EARTH DAYS
Blue Jays staff and infielder Juan Kelly attended the Friends of the Island Parks ‘Island Earth Days’ in April to show their appreciation and support of the incredible natural beauty in and around Dunedin.

ST. MATH DAY
Infielder Matt Dean and pitcher Andrew Case visited Northwest Elementary School to commend students for their academic achievements in mathematics and encourage them to continue working hard in their studies.

ACHIEVA SPORTS FEST
D-Jay and staff made two visits to Achieva Sports Fests to help promote active lifestyles, participation in youth sports to children and will be joining their box car rally this fall.

HEALTHY KIDS DAY
Blue Jays staff and D-Jay stopped by Healthy Kids Day in April to encourage children to adopt healthy lifestyles and to get outside and play.

PLACE PROGRAM
In July, D-Jay hung out with students at Chasco Elementary School who participate in the PLACE Program, a before and after school activity program designed to provide an active and enriching environment for students outside of school hours.

MEASE HEALTH CARE FOUNDATION LUNCHEON
Infielder Matt Dean, pitcher Andrew Case, and D-Jay attended the Mease Health Care Foundation Luncheon in May to thank local healthcare workers for all they do to provide for the needs of the Dunedin community.

LARGO TEEN IDOL
Blue Jays staff and D-Jay attended the 11th annual Largo Teen Idol in April to support the talent and creativity of our local community. The Blue Jays invited the winner Colby Brown to sing the National Anthem at a Dunedin Blue Jays game.

MASCOT FUN
Mascot Mania champion D-Jay made a host of appearances throughout the year in the community including at Munchies with Mascots in Largo in April and visits to Spectrum Field, George M. Steinbrenner Field, and Tropicana Field.

CURTIS FAMILY FUN NIGHT
The Blue Jays joined in on the excitement at Curtis Elementary’s Family Fun Night in March, sending staff and D-Jay to help provide a fun-filled evening for local families and children.

FUEL TO PLAY 60
In support of healthy eating habits and programs that help offer breakfast to underprivileged students, D-Jay attended Kings Highway Elementary School’s Fuel Up To Play 60 breakfast in March.
Dunedin Blue Jays starting pitcher Josh DeGraaf had a memorable season on the field, establishing himself as Dunedin's ace in the second half and helping to pitch the team to a share of the Florida State League's Championship. While his impact was great between the white lines, DeGraaf made many more memories for members of our local Dunedin community off the field. For his continued efforts to support the local community, DeGraaf was recently honored as the Blue Jays 2017 Community Service Award winner.

The Blue Jays Community Service Award has been given annually since 2012 to the Blue Jays player who best exemplifies the team's commitment to enriching the Dunedin community through a variety of outreach programs that promote education, healthy lifestyles, and charity. Throughout the 2017 season, DeGraaf represented the Blue Jays in the community through numerous appearances away from the ballpark, supporting and encouraging local children, students, and families.

DeGraaf helped lead the 2017 Blue Jays Bookin' It To The Ballpark Reading Program, the largest community outreach program in the franchise’s history, reaching five hundred elementary school students in 14 Pinellas County schools. DeGraaf visited local elementary schools to support the program and promote literacy, reading to local students, answering their questions, and encouraging them in their studies. Over the course of the six-week program, local students read for 146,035 minutes, over 101 full days of reading.

DeGraaf was also active at the 2017 Blue Jays Bowling Tournament, an event that raised $12,820 for Ronald McDonald House Charities of Tampa Bay. Prior to the event, he volunteered to paint pottery to be raffled at the event and then helped raise nearly $1000 selling raffle tickets to fans at the event.

DeGraaf also took to the shopping mall to help out local families, participating in the Blue Jays Here We Grow and Toys For Tots Shopping Drives. During the Here We Grow Shopping Spree, he helped purchase school supplies and clothing for local students in need. During the Toys For Tots drive, he joined teammate Ryan Cook in selecting $1000 worth of toys and presents to be given to local children during the upcoming holiday season.

DeGraaf joins an impressive list of past Dunedin Blue Jays Community Service Award winners.  
2012: Danny Barnes  
2013: Matt Newman  
2014: Taylor Cole  
2015: L.B. Dantzler and Jorge Saez  
2016: Tim Mayza
Thank you to all who have helped brighten the days of the youth in our community. Thank you to all of our community partners who have assumed a vital role in creating lasting impacts on those we interact with, learn from, and are inspired by.

Because of all of your tireless efforts and selfless support, we are able to fulfill our role as a contributor to the betterment of our community. Lastly, thank you to YOU, the reader. We hope you have found the preceding content inspiring, and share in our desire to make our community a thriving source of future leaders.

For more information on the Dunedin Blue Jays Community Outreach Programs, please contact:

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