



Collier Fund plays key role

By Jon Winkler

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LOWELL » Teens at the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell have the memory of Sean Collier and those honoring it to thank for supporting the club's basketball leagues and Christmas activities.

The Officer Sean A. Collier Memorial Fund donated \$ 13,200 to the club this year. \$ 5,000 of that was a grant to pay for referees to oversee basketball games for the club's traveling teams in the winter and the Summer Peace League. The remaining \$ 8,200 was raised for the club to host a Christmas party for the teenage attendees, along with providing Christmas dinner and gifts to 10 local families during the holiday season.

The fund was named after Sean A. Collier, a police officer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who was shot by the Boston Marathon bombers, Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, in the line of duty on Apr. 18, 2013. The fund helps raise money for the families of other officers who died in the line of duty.

One of the public faces of the fund is Joe Rogers, Collier's stepfather, who said on Sunday that his late stepson would frequently play basketball on top of being a generous citizen in his spare time. The fund has honored Collier's spirit by supporting charitable actions, including a trip for kids to visit the Massachusetts State Police Student Trooper Program in the summer and having runners in the Boston Marathon.

" Sean did a lot of volunteer

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work, so this fund is meant to keep that going," Rogers said.

Rich Sullivan, who was Collier's administrative sergeant at MIT, said that the Boys & Girls Club collaboration came about last year after the fund donated a wrestling mat to Lowell High School and wanted to do more for the city. Sullivan said the fund was then connected to Joe Hungler, the club's executive director, to offer help with the basketball leagues.

" We found this to be something that can help the kids and keep them off the streets," Sullivan added. " It's us reaching out to them — we're keeping Sean's name alive to do this."

Hungler said that the club's traveling basketball team usually plays through a traditional basketball season running through the fall and winter, while the Summer Peace League usually plays twice a week for seven weeks in the summer. Both leagues serve to not only offer fun for the teens, but also pro- motivation for them to further their educations. Hungler explains that members of both teams have to show their report cards and have a school plan, as a means to inspire teens to reach for more in life. "Short term, the goal is for the kids to be safe and have positive role models," Hungler said. " Long term, the goal is to make sure they graduate high school and have a plan for the future."

Ajadus Rosa, 17, and Dennis Carbonneau, 16, both attend Greater Lowell Technical High School and were both cut from their school basketball teams before finding a "family" in the traveling winter team and the Summer Peace League. Rosa, thanks to the " better opportunity" the club's teams have provide vided, said he dreams of attending and playing for Emmanuel College. Carbonneau said that playing on both teams helped his mindset and allowed him to grow as a player.

" I've learned a lot of personal lessons here," Rosa said. " I just like being involved with other people."

" This place is great," Carbonneau added. " It's like a big family."



Basketball at the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell got a \$13,200 boost from the Officer Sean A. Collier Memorial Fund.

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