

Pass It On®...

Cross Safely.

How one man made sure his retirement years were spent helping kids move safely through life.

Ron had a good life as a sales rep and as a father. When retirement came around and the kids were grown, Ron looked around his community and saw a lot of aimless young boys just wandering the streets after school. So he checked in at the local community center and volunteered to coach a youth team. And another, and another.

As the sports changed with the seasons, Ron picked up new crops of boys, added a few of their parents to help out and taught the same principles: hard work, fair play, discipline and accountability. In his mid-70s, Ron strode up and down the sidelines, the hardwood, the dugout, shouting instructions to his boys and moving them into the best position to be successful.

Mistakes were shrugged off with lighthearted comments: "I think your batting helmet was on backwards for that swing." And the classic: "Did I tell you to drop the ball?" There would be a bit of laughter, and Ron would always retort with a half-smile: "Don't drop the ball unless I tell you to."

The boys learned not to take mistakes too seriously, but to recognize them and work on changing habits. They learned that everybody gets a turn and deserves to be supported. When one quiet boy recovered a fumble for the first time, he was so overcome by his teammates lifting him onto their shoulders that he burst into tears.

Another boy, whose parents had just split up, decided he'd sit on the bench for the game. Every time a player was subbed out, the player sat next to the boy and put an arm around him. It was the kind of family he needed at the moment.

Every new season began the same way, with Ron giving each boy a nickname: Thunder, Superman, Rocket. It was a way of joining the family, of starting fresh, of being part of a group that would stand beside you. For 10 years Ron raised hundreds of boys on the philosophy that they will do great things if you just give them a little encouragement and a lot of practice time.

Ron retired when he had a mini-stroke. He didn't tell anybody; he just lay low for a year. Then one of his former players spotted him working as a crossing guard. It was something that got him out of bed in the morning, still wanting to keep kids safe. Word spread, and most mornings, former players drove by and honked their horns or bent their jogging routes to go past him and say hello. It wasn't orchestrated — just one of those things that happens when bonds are strong and memories swell up gratitude in your chest.

Mentoring...PassItOn.com

By The Foundation for a Better Life®

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