

A fitting tribute to Garwood



Dave Oberhelman

Follow 1,764 followers

Follow 111



Yanni Pappas is presented the Andrew Garwood STRONG Foundation scholarship at Glenbard West's football banquet last weekend. From left are Glenbard West football coach Chad Hetlet, Yanni Pappas, Terri and Steve Garwood.

Photo courtesy of Steve Garwood

In terms of the spirit of giving, 2017 got off to a great start.

At Glenbard West's football banquet Sunday, senior linebacker John "Yanni" Pappas was awarded a \$5,000 college scholarship from the Andrew Garwood STRONG Foundation. It was the first scholarship awarded in the name of the 2011 Glenbard West graduate who died of brain cancer at age 22, a year ago Thursday on Jan. 12, 2016.

The foundation's initial goal was supporting brain cancer research, then shifted to a memorial scholarship granted to a Hilltoppers senior football player who exhibited Garwood's traits of leadership, integrity and unselfishness.

Coach Chad Hetlet and his staff narrowed several candidates down to one they felt best "embodied Andrew's spirit," Hetlet said.

"Andrew always kept everything positive and kept a smile on his face and Yanni is the same kid in that regard," said Hetlet, who remembered the day Garwood, a linebacker himself in his playing days, entered his office to tell him about the cancer diagnosis.

"I was the emotional one, and he was almost trying to console me," Hetlet said.

"One of the things about Andrew that came out more and more over time was how he made decisions based on what was best for the team or the group, not necessarily on what would benefit him," said Andrew's mother, Terri, who presented the grant with her husband, Steve.

"And so some of the things we learned about Yanni were a few examples of how he was there for other teammates when he could have been focusing on himself," she said.

Pappas had plenty to dwell on.

Last spring while playing the outfield for Glenbard West's baseball team he broke his left wrist. He recovered sufficiently to return at outside linebacker last fall but in Week 5 against Lyons Twp. he broke his right wrist. The injuries will keep him from playing baseball this spring, he said.

Nicknamed "Yanni" due to the Greek heritage of his father, Alki, Pappas is an honor roll student who participates in Glenbard West's Target Success big brother-big sister program and its Mawi Learning leadership group.

He's still deciding which college he'll attend, but he's interested in studying supply chain management, a good fit since his parents are food and beverage people. In his spare time Yanni works as a busboy, server and general gofer at Shanahan's Food & Spirits in Woodridge, alongside his mother, Amanda, and grandfather, Rich Moore.

Pappas had no idea he'd earned the Garwood Foundation scholarship until his name was called.

"Honestly, when I found out I was pretty overwhelmed. I went up there and met the Garwoods, and I just felt great that I could represent their son," he said.

"I'm just grateful to the Garwoods. I hope anything I can do for them moving forward I definitely would like to do. And thanks to all who have gotten me to where I am at this point."

Undoubtedly the feeling is mutual.

"The first thing I think about Andrew is he was one of those guys who made everyone around him smile when he smiled," Hetlet said. "And Yanni is one of those guys."

Another Guy like that

On Jan. 8 viewers of ABC-7 Eyewitness News saw Wheaton Warrenville South boys and girls soccer coach Guy Callipari open a large retractable door at the Lyons Township High School field house in LaGrange. A new Jeep Grand Cherokee rolled in, a gift to Callipari by Buddy's Helpers and the PepsiCo Showdown, the giant high school soccer tournament.

Months ago, Callipari said, the Showdown folks told about 100 coaches that five of them would be highlighted due to their community service efforts. One would be gifted a new vehicle.

Callipari stood there as one coach was given tickets to a Cubs game. Another received Blackhawks tickets. And so on.

"I was still standing," he said, "and as you're putting things together you probably want to be the last one standing."

PepsiCo Showdown organizers recognized Callipari's standing as a coach who participates in or leads a variety of charitable efforts, from his school's Tiger Day of Caring to providing soccer equipment to ministries to working with PepsiCo for projects abroad.

"We believe we can use soccer as a catalyst toward development and teaching life lessons," Callipari said. "We think that kind of growth, getting outside of your comfort zone at times, will certainly help you become better players, as well. It'll help you grow, help you be more mature."

Callipari admitted to awkwardness in front of fellow coaches on Sunday but felt "in a position to represent all of us."

"It's been slightly overwhelming," he said Tuesday. "I haven't gotten too much done over the last 48 hours. But that's OK, it's a small price to pay."

Getting going

Boys and girls lacrosse will debut as sanctioned Illinois High School Association sports in the spring of 2018. Someone needs to make those slashing and screening foul calls, so the IHSA will host a free educational event for potential lacrosse officials from 3-5 p.m. Sunday at Glenbard West's Biester Fieldhouse.

Clinicians will provide a basic overview of officiating boys and girls lacrosse and will explain the differences between them. IHSA officials will present on each sport independently, and the event will close with scrimmages so attendees can watch, learn, ask questions. The IHSA also will explain the process of becoming a lacrosse official.

Attendees are asked to RSVP either by emailing the IHSA's Matt Troha at mtroha@ihsa.org or via the IHSA's Facebook page event.

This just in

Glenbard North junior offensive lineman Jose Vazquez has been named to the 2017 United States Under-17 National Football Team that will compete against Japan in the eighth International Bowl at AT & T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, on Saturday. The 6-foot-3, 295-pound guard was one of three Illinois selections.

Milestone

At a wrestling tournament in Polo on Jan. 7, Lisle 138-pounder Drew Sonnefeldt won his 100th match, a 6-3 decision over Erie-Prophetstown's Kerrick Cameron.

Joining fellow senior Mark Pivek as a two-time team captain, Sonnefeldt is the 12th Lion to reach 100 wins, according to coach John Ruettiger. Dan Hajek, the 1993 state champion, heads the list at 126.

"He's an outstanding kid not only as a wrestler but as a person," Ruettiger said of Sonnefeldt. "He's been a big tribute to our program the last four years. He continues to improve every day in the practice room and he's got a great shot at being on that medal stand this year."

doberhelman@dailyherald.com

Follow Dave on Twitter @doberhelman1