

South Roxana Police Chief begins fundraising for students to attend renowned youth football camp

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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SOUTH ROXANA - South Roxana Police Chief Bob Coles has established a program for kids called **1st and 10** that he sincerely believes will be a boost to the futures of those who participate.

“I am asking for assistance to help send some deserving students to camp,” he said. “I have been serving the police department for nineteen years and have started a program called 1st and 10.

“This program started from a simple premise. If I could provide an experience for my son, why can’t I try to provide the same experience for another child? I have three children in the Roxana School District which are all involved in sports. This program will have myself and another officer take our students to a different event each year.

“As the Police Chief, I have seen some horrible living conditions for kids within our school district. What truly opened my eyes is when I talked with teachers and coaches about how some of the high school athletes were in sports just to escape their home life. I’ve always viewed athletics more as kids who want to achieve and come from good homes with committed families. This is not the case for some of our students. The parents/coaches are serving as a parental figure which these kids so desperately need.”

Coles said when he decided to sign up his son to attend Notre Dame Football Camp, he decided he would personally sponsor another student to let them have an experience of a lifetime.

“The students will be able to walk onto Notre Dame’s Football Field, be coached and trained by the Notre Dame football players and staff,” he said. “The sponsorship for the kid cost around \$650. After talking it over with my wife, I figured some other people would be willing to as well.”

A question Coles has received multiple times is would the program just be for kids from South Roxana and he said no.

“The program is open to any student in the Roxana School District,” he said. “The one question I was asked about the program, is it just the kids from South Roxana. “If a student needs help or should be rewarded for their behavior, boundaries do not apply in my opinion.”

Coles’ request to businesses/citizens is they entertain the thought sponsoring a kid to attend this camp. “If you can’t afford a \$650 sponsorship, a partial donation would be appreciated,” he said. “With enough help, I am hoping I can bring as many kids as possible to camp and give them hope and maybe help them strive for something better in their lives.

“I believe a prestigious University like Notre Dame can show the kids there is something beyond our school district borders. What I truly hope to do is bridge a gap in our communities with police and student, along with letting a student know even though they may feel no one is on their side people do care and are watching out for them.

“If I can get enough support for this program, I would like to change up the event each year to involve different students interest in our district. I talked about one year doing basketball, a fishing trip, or maybe the arts/theater. I want to reach as many kids as possible.

“I have already had great support from local business and citizens in town. Jeff Heinz from Jarrett Industry has already donated \$1,000, Mike Marko from Mikes Inc. donated a \$1,000. Jason Hasting, a resident from town, donated \$200. Plus, I have other commitments from business in town such as Rick Liljenberg Plumbing, who committed to sponsoring a student. Tyler Pitchford committed to a donation for helping out with the program.”

Coles said he has seen troubled youth in the Roxana School District that effects all the surrounding communities regardless of what town he or she may live in.

“We need to take the approach of it takes a community to raise a child and not be so dead set on who’s town this child belongs too,” Coles said. “Our towns should be committed to working together and helping everyone out, not just our residents. The school district has a lot of children and I applaud the effort they make to have a safe, fun filled environment for our children to excel in.

“If you are interested in helping our the youth program, donations can be made to the South Roxana Police Department,” he continued. “If you have any questions about this program I can be reached at bcoles@southroxana.org. or call (618) 254-7469.”