

Grappling for Gifts and Strategic BJJ Martial Arts Fundraiser Benefited Children's Hospital of Illinois

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
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ALTON - Grappling for Gifts, a jiu-jitsu-based public charity, and Strategic BJJ, a local martial arts studio, collaborated on a fundraising seminar earlier this fall which helped raise funds for gifts and supplies to be donated to the Children's Hospital of Illinois.

Ryan Prouty, director and founder of Grappling for Gifts, said while the organization has grown over time, its goal remains the same.

"It started off as a way for me to use the martial art of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu as a way to raise money to buy Christmas presents for the kids in the Children's Hospital of

Illinois,” he said. “It started off pretty simple and then just kind of bloomed into something a little bit bigger, where now I’m doing charity seminars, doing charity events, and it’s just gotten a lot bigger the past seven seasons.”

Prouty said he met Strategic BJJ Owner and Head Instructor Keith Steinacher through Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu circles, as it’s “a small martial arts world, where a lot of people know people.” Prouty said he “jumped at the chance” to do a charitable fundraiser at BJJ, noting this marks his second year visiting the studio.

“After doing this for a few years and Keith got his own place, he asked if I wanted to come down and do a donation-based charity, and of course I jumped at the chance,” Prouty said. “We’ve done it the last couple years and basically, I show up and his students - or anybody, really ... can show up and we kick back, and I show some of my favorite techniques, and we just have a good time.”

He said this year’s seminar was all about leg attacks.

“This year was all leg locks,” he said. “I did two hours on how to attack people’s lower extremities - it was kind of fun!”

Proceeds from the event went directly towards funding gifts and supplies for Children’s Hospital of Illinois patients - Prouty said he has some contacts at the hospital who regularly update him with supply needs, as well as sending him Amazon wishlists for the kids.

“I kind of work off their list, and then over the past several years, I’ve really gotten to know some of the head nurses and people in different areas of the Children’s Hospital, so they’ll email me or call me if they need something specific,” he said. “I’ve really gotten to know a lot of people over there, some really awesome people.”

He said recently, one of his contacts at the hospital told him they were totally out of some vibrating pads which help newborns sleep - thanks to their fundraiser with Strategic BJJ, they were able to buy a new 30-pack of those pads and Prouty recently dropped them off.

“One of my contacts said, ‘Look, we’re totally out of these things. If you could swing it, this is what we’d really want,’” he said. “I just dropped those off last Tuesday and Keith’s seminar helped fund that also, so it’s pretty cool.”

For more information about Grappling for Gifts, including donation links and more on the organization’s backstory, visit grapplingforgifts.com. To learn more about Strategic

BJJ, visit strategicbjj.com.