



# Warner Teaming Up in STL

by Brian Stull

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<http://www.stlbaseballweekly.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/15-10-28-Kurt-Warner-1-on-1.mp3>

It has been more than 10 years since Kurt Warner last threw a pass for the St. Louis Rams, but the former quarterback remains active in the community as his First Things First Foundation is again kicking off their annual Warner Warm-Up campaign.

“It’s incredible how time flies,” said Warner of this being the 15th year of the coat drive. “At the same time, it’s incredible that the coat drive continues to go on when we’ve been gone for ten years—it just speaks volumes to the people there and the character of the people in that community. I continue to tell people we’ve been gone for ten years, yet the coat drive is bigger and bigger every single year. We’re getting more sponsors, we’re getting more people that are having coat drives at their office or in their neighborhood or at their church, really stepping up to the table every year.”

The two-week coat drive runs from November 1-14<sup>th</sup> and encourages Metro St. Louisans to donate new and gently-used winter coats which will be distributed by Operation Food Search to homeless shelters, schools, and other social service agencies throughout the Bi-state region in time for the bitter cold winter months.

Walgreens, FedEx Office, LookAfter Hair Company, USAgain, Mattress Firm, YMCA, and participating credit unions and police stations in the Bi-State all serve as drop-off locations throughout greater St. Louis. With more than 700 locations, there is sure to be a convenient location for all who wish to donate. A complete list of drop-off locations is available at [www.kurtwarner.org](http://www.kurtwarner.org). Financial donations are also accepted on the website. A \$25 donation will cover the cost of a new coat for a child in need of proper winter outerwear.

Besides the Warm-Up, Warner and his wife Brenda are also hosting another edition of “A Night With Champions”, which will feature Mike Matheny and Adam Wainwright joining them on Monday, November 16th at The Pageant.

“It’s a night that’s centered around the idea of what makes a champion,” explained Warner. “What went into making these guys great and taking them to the top of their game. Some stories and lessons that learned along the way.”

Some members of the audience will also be called to join Warner, Matheny, and Wainwright on stage for a sports trivia contest.

Besides the charitable efforts, his work as an NFL Network analyst has brought Warner back to St. Louis on occasion—and has also kept him up to date on his former team.

“I think the biggest thing is they continue to struggle in the pass game,” said Warner. “In a day and age where the NFL is designed is setup to be able to pass and have success throwing the football, being in a league where you have to score points to win, it’s hard to just win defensively anymore because of some of the challenges and how could some of the players are.”

“When Sam was here, we always said every year ‘you gotta surround him with talent, they gotta be able to do more in the passing game’. Now, Todd Gurley’s going to help that no question with the way he’s playing and the things he’s capable of doing, but they just have to get more production out of the quarterback position and in the passing game, I think, if they want to compete not only for the West, but in the NFC. It’s harder and harder every year if you can’t win putting the ball in the air to be successful and compete with the best teams in the league. I think that’s their biggest shortcoming, continues to be an area where they have to continue to grow.”

And part of improving in the passing game is catching the ball.

“It is, it comes down to work, it comes down to being a guy that prides himself on making every catch, making the tough catches,” said Warner on the dropped passes by the Rams this season. “Often times, you can just make a better throw as a quarterback—so there’s a bunch of things that go into it. Sometimes it’s the mental thing of just focusing, with all the other things going on the field to have to focus as the ball gets there and instead of turning and making a big play or worrying about a defender, all those things are huge challenges when you’re playing at the highest level, no question. But yeah, that’s what receivers get paid for. They get paid to catch the ball and you

expect them, when the ball's in a position for them to catch it, to have to make that play 95% of the time. Otherwise, again—another reason why teams struggle, is that if you don't make the plays you're supposed to make, it's tough to be successful in this business.”

photo credit: Kurt Warner