

D211 POST: BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT HONORS LEGACY OF HOFFMAN SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENT



Seldom do mainstream and Special Education students work together in a sporting event.

The Amy Rudolph Basketball Tournament provides a unique opportunity for District 211 students to cheer one another on while raising funds for a worthy cause.

The tournament, in its 37th year, recognizes Amy Rudolph, a special education student, who passed away in November, 1982, of kidney failure. She was only 15 years old. Amy's love of sports and her outgoing personality inspired those around her. Three months after this popular student passed, the school hosted a sporting event that continues every year in her honor. All profits directly benefit the National Kidney Foundation.

The 37th Annual Amy Rudolph Basketball Tournament will take place 6 p.m., Friday, Feb. 22nd at Hoffman Estates High School, 1100 W. Higgins Rd. Special Education students from Hoffman Estates High, Hersey High, Schaumburg High, Palatine High and Kirk Schools will participate. Mainstream students from Hoffman will also participate as referees, coaches, scorekeepers, and in other capacities.

A successful community event for 30 plus years, this tournament has already raised

thousands of dollars for the National Kidney Foundation.

Tickets are \$3.00 and are available in advance from HEHS, or at the door.

HOFFMAN ESTATES, PALATINE ELS STUDENTS PLAY BALL FOR A CAUSE IN 31ST ANNUAL AMY RUDOLPH BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT



Zain Nasir (center) and teammates run with the ball opposite PHS students Jake Lischewski and Ayesha Williams. All players are in the Educational Life Skills program. Photo courtesy HR Imaging

Usually basketball tournaments showcase rivalries between various schools as players compete for a first-place finish. However, students at four area schools become closer each year as they play basketball for a cause.

The 31st Annual Amy Rudolph Basketball Tournament took place on Feb. 22 at Hoffman Estates High School. Participants in the event are special education students in the Educational Life Skills (ELS) program from Hoffman Estates, Palatine, and Hersey High School, as well as Kirk School. All proceeds of the event are donated to the National Kidney Foundation. All teams played hard, but Palatine High School was victorious and took first place at the tournament.

“It’s a really fun night, we pack the house and everyone watches the games and cheers on the kids,” said Hope Hazlett, teacher in the ELS program at Hoffman Estates High School. “It’s a lot of fun, it’s a very festive atmosphere, and all the kids are

always excited about it.”

Amy Rudolph was a student in the ELS program at Hoffman Estates High School who passed away due to liver failure. To continue her legacy, her family started the Amy Rudolph Basketball Tournament. The tournament consists of several games played between teams from each of the schools. Pep squads from Palatine and Hoffman Estates High School composed of students in the ELS program, in addition to the schools’ cheerleading and pom pom squads, come to cheer for the teams while they play.

The highlight of this event is bringing all students together in a positive social environment. Students are provided with dinner before the games. During the tournament, two schools play against each other first, followed by the other two schools playing a game. The winner of each of those first two games will compete in a championship game against each other.



*The HEHS athletes and partners.
Back Row: Zach Zambio, Cesar Perez,
Chris Smolik, Streten Rosic, Matt
Sommerer, Anthony Dickey, Nick
Mirich, Bryan Howard, Devan Patel.
Middle Row: Zain Nasir, Michael
Quiroz, Virginia Green, Ala Samara,
partner Briana Sawtell. Front Row:
partners Kelly Grudzinski, Jillian
Steinmiller, Kayla Majeske, Taylor
Osterman, Nicole Swietek, Tracy
Cvitkovich, Eliza VanDertleyden,
and Helena Mattson.*

School spirit ran high during the day of the event. Students decorated the players’ lockers with encouraging signs. Additionally, there was plenty of entertainment to root on players and hype up crowd participation during the tournament. The pep band performed during the game while the pep squads kept the energy high between games and plays. Additionally, there were raffles for prizes. Any raffle proceeds were also donated to the National Kidney Foundation.

“Students get to perform, play, and participate in a high school experience that they might not normally have,” said Mary Pat Kronos, assistant director of Special Education in District 211. “The stands are full, and we have peers, students, and alumni that come back.”

Hazlett said this event is a collective effort that brings all students together, not

only within the ELS program and Hoffman Estates High School, but also from various departments. These volunteers are what she said keeps the event running each year.

BOOKING WITH THE HAWKS PROGRAM GETS ELEMENTARY STUDENTS EXCITED TO READ



Students from Hoffman Estates High School's cheerleading, pom poms, band, and girls' and boys' basketball teams participated in the assemblies.

To help excite elementary students about reading, high school students at Hoffman Estates High School traveled to seven local elementary schools to put on assemblies about their reading program.

Joining the Hawk mascot, members of the HEHS girls' and boys' basketball teams, pom poms, cheerleaders, and band traveled to the schools to tell elementary students a story about reading and share information about their winter reading program. These assemblies took place on Dec. 20 and 21.

The participating District 54 schools include: Anne Fox Elementary, Armstrong Elementary, MacArthur International Spanish Academy, Winston Churchill Elementary, Albert Einstein Elementary, Blackwell Elementary, and John Muir Literacy Academy.



Students in District 54 were happy to see the HEHS hawk mascot.

“Our high school students are role models to these younger kids, and those kids know some of our athletes and cheerleaders,” said Paul Moersch, a teacher at Conant and Hoffman Estates High Schools. “Our students absolutely loved it. They are excited to go to the schools. They get to see old teachers, and they can give back to the schools that they went to when they were younger.”



Students at Winston Churchill Elementary School showed excitement for reading while cheerleaders performed stunts.

During the assemblies, senior basketball players from HEHS shot hoops with some of the elementary students. Pom poms performed a short dance routine, and cheerleaders performed stunts that correlated with the story they were telling. Moersch said each team brought one junior so they could be leaders next year.

Students who participate in the program are required to read a certain set of books which is determined by their teacher. If they reach that goal by the second week of January, they are given a voucher to attend a Hoffman Estates High School varsity boys' basketball game on Jan. 18. There, students will be recognized for their reading efforts at halftime, and will be eligible to participate in games and receive prizes.



Students at Albert Einstein Elementary shoot hoops with the girls' and boys' varsity basketball teams.

Moersch, who is a former teacher in School District 54, said this event was modeled after Conant High School's Booking with the Cougars program. He said he wanted to bring the program to HEHS and carry on the event as he had seen it when he taught at the elementary level.

"It's important to have a sense of community between the high school and elementary levels," Moersch said. "It's a great way to give back."