

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.