

ASHE COUNTY WINS NORTH CAROLINA SPIRIT OF SPORT AWARD

Written by Rick Strunk
Wednesday, 18 April 2012 21:28

Ashe County High School is the second annual recipient of the North Carolina Spirit of Sport Award presented by the North Carolina High School Athletic Association. The NCHSAA is participating in the "Spirit of Sport Award" program sponsored by the National Federation of State High School Associations. It was established to recognize

those individuals who exemplify the ideals of the positive spirit of sport that represents the core mission of education-based athletics. The award is given in recognition of a specific act or an activity of longer duration. Nominees can be a coach, athletic administrator, trainer, student-athlete or any others associated with the school's athletic program. The school's efforts will be recognized at the NCHSAA Annual Meeting on May 3 at the Smith Center on the campus of the University of North Carolina.

Davis Whitfield, NCHSAA commissioner, said, "Ashe County's great acts of concern for a student-athlete from another school define what the Spirit of Sport Award represents."

Luke Hampton, a star athlete at Alleghany High School, suffered a severe spinal cord injury while participating in a wrestling tournament on December 3, 2011. He sustained a broken neck in two places, had surgery and spent extended time at the Shepherd Center in Atlanta, a non-profit hospital specializing in treatment, research and rehabilitation for people with spinal cord or brain injuries.

Marc Payne, athletic director and head men's basketball coach at Ashe County, as well as principal Jason Krider, thought their school should do something in support of Hampton, but as he explored possibilities he found that several student groups at his high school had already begun to work. Several Ashe County student-athletes then met with Payne so efforts could be coordinated.

Here are just a few of the things that Ashe County did on behalf of the athlete from Alleghany:

--when Ashe County hosted Alleghany in a regular season game in December, several activities were part of the game. The Ashe County team wore green and gold "Luke Strong" t-shirts instead of their normal purple and silver shooting shirts as it warmed up in honor of Hampton

--special t-shirts supporting Hampton were designed and sold before, during and after the game; due to popular demand sales were extended throughout the season

--Ashe County students donated a special admission fee for the game (they normally are admitted free)

--a 50/50 raffle was held at that game with Alleghany and then at other games throughout the basketball season

--sale of bracelets featuring "36 Strong" (Hampton's number as a member of the Alleghany football team) and "Luke Strong", phrases which the Alleghany community had adopted, were sold

--a Valentine's Dance was organized at Ashe County with the proceeds going to the Hampton family

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Payne summed up the support his school had provided, saying "Safe to say, there is not an individual donating to the cause who wouldn't give anything for Luke Hampton not to have suffered the injury. But when there is no changing the past, it is comforting to see a wonderful community and their efforts of love poured out."