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## Huron and Pioneer players give back

Community service priority for teams

Thursday, December 14, 2006

**BY ROB HOFFMAN**  
News Sports Reporter

For Rex Stanczak and Waleed Samaha, being a player on a high school basketball team is more than just tossing up a jump shot.

It's also about growing as a person.

Which is why Stanczak, Pioneer's coach, and Samaha, Huron's coach, recently got their teams involved in community service projects.

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This past weekend, more than 40 Pioneer players and coaches helped the Salvation Army sort tons of donated food and pack it in boxes that will be delivered to needy families. And during the Thanksgiving break, the River Rats spent a few hours playing board games and visiting with sick children at the University of Michigan's Mott Children's Hospital.

Stanczak said freshman coach Fred Webster originally came up with the idea for the project. But by the time Saturday rolled around, 41 of Pioneer's 44 varsity, junior varsity and freshman players, along with four coaches and a parent, showed up at Salvation Army's Arbana Drive offices to spend three hours getting the food ready to be shipped out to low-income families.

"It was a great time," Stanczak said. "We got to talk about making a difference in people's lives. Sometimes, 14- to 18-year-olds don't think about those things unless it's put in front of them."

On the Saturday after Thanksgiving, Samaha and his players went to the hospital's community room for what he described as a low-key visit that involved playing board games, drawing and painting with 75 critically ill children of up to 16 years old.

"We just wanted to brighten their morning a little bit," Samaha said. "It's one of the priorities of the program - that our kids will participate in community service."

### Ypsilanti grads playing


Quite a few former Ypsilanti Braves are playing college basketball these days. First, 2005 graduate Josh Young is averaging 21.5 points per game for Kellogg Community College in Battle Creek, which ranks him 10th nationally in National Junior College Athletic Association Division II. Also on the team with Young are former Braves Antonio Pharam, Cortney Smith and ex-Belleville player Ka'Ron Gaines. C.J. Simmons is a freshman at Owens Community College in Ohio, while Manny Richardson is averaging 7 points per game at Neosho County Community College in Kansas. In Division I, Woody Payne is averaging 10 minutes a game at the University of Detroit.

#### Game of the week

Can the suddenly red-hot Willow Run Flyers keep their undefeated record intact against one of their fiercest rivals? That question will be answered Friday night when Willow Run (4-0) travels to face Belleville (1-0) at about 7:15 p.m.

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