

Double team—ChildNet teams up for foster care



John Offerdahl, former Dolphins player, left; Drew Greep, Heart Gallery; Twan Russell, former Miami Dolphins player; Derrick Roberts, ChildNet; West Shelton, Heart Gallery; and Robert Smith, former Vikings player

The XLIII Super Bowl has come and gone but football fever has not left South Florida. Former Miami Dolphins' NFL linebackers Twan Russell and John Offerdahl and former Minnesota Vikings running back Robert Smith shared their time, talent and love of the game with Broward County's foster children. On February 7, the Dolphins Training Facility was the scene of smiles, cheers and fun for more than 75 of Broward County's foster youth.

The event was organized by the Miami Dolphins, ChildNet and the Heart Gallery of Broward County. Former NFL heavyweights and the Dolphins Cheerleaders spent their morning hosting a cheerleading camp and a football clinic.

Jennifer Smith, ChildNet's Foster Home recruitment coordinator and key organizer for the event, considers it to be a success. "Foster children have been through many challenges that would be overwhelming for the average adult, much less children. Today, they can enjoy just being kids," added Jennifer.

Former Viking's running back Robert Smith was excited about the chance to talk to and coach local foster kids. "As a former player, I know first-hand the value of athletics in promoting discipline and teamwork in a child's life," said Robert. "It was a fun experience that exposed them to the sense of belonging that's found in a team

environment."

Twan Russell, former Dolphins' linebacker and Dolphins' director of Youth and Community Programs, said the franchise is honored to be able to host an event where foster children can have fun and be themselves without being concerned with the worries of everyday life. Lunch and refreshments were provided by Publix.

Before and after the event The Heart Gallery of Broward County had professional photographers take photos of children that are available for adoption. The Heart Gallery is a traveling photo exhibit of foster children who are waiting to be permanently adopted. They raise awareness about the need for local foster children to have a second chance at a family by displaying the photo exhibit in many public places throughout the county. The Heart Gallery exhibit is at Nova Southeastern University through mid-March. The event provided children with a dream of going pro and young football fanatics with the opportunity to learn about the game from three former pros who have 23 years of combined NFL experience.

ChildNet is a private, non-profit organization selected by the state through a competitive process to serve as the local Community Based Care lead agency.

For more information, call 954-414-6000 or visit www.childnet.us. ■



Robert Smith and Twan Russell kick off football camp with a pep talk



Broward County's foster children take part in the special program