



Charities Gain Big From Game

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The Washington Literacy Council opened up several doors for Sandra Johnson, including the opportunity to coach T-ball, softball and baseball.

That's why Johnson won't be cheering just for the teams at tonight's Roll Call Congressional Baseball Game, but for the charities that will benefit from the game's proceeds as well.

"I didn't know how to do anything, as far as what type of job I wanted," said Johnson, 48. "But after everything I've learned, I've started coaching sports and working in recreation. I used to be scared of doing that because I would have to do a lot of writing. I'm not scared anymore."

Johnson is just one of hundreds of people who have benefited from the two charities, the Washington Literacy Council and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington. Both organizations have partnered with the game for several years, receiving thousands of dollars to fund their programs.

Last year, the game raised more than \$150,000.

The WLC began in 1963 as an all-volunteer organization, offering tutoring to students who struggled with reading. It became a full-fledged nonprofit with paid staff in the 1990s.

Today, the organization offers one-on-one tutoring programs, class instruction in reading and computer literacy, and family literacy programs. More than 200 people are involved with the WLC.

"There are few places for adults to go when they struggle [with reading] after they graduate from school or they just don't graduate," said Liz Liptak, the WLC's executive director. "We provide this lifeline for adults who did not learn to read adequately so that they can function in the modern work world."

The WLC became involved with the game in 1993 when Mike Erlandson, a Hill staffer and the Democrats' team manager, suggested the organization receive some of the game's proceeds. Erlandson and others who worked on the Hill volunteered with the WLC at the time.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington also receives support from the game. The organization, which is the largest affiliate of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, provides youth programs in education, arts and recreation.

The funds received from the game go to athletic programs, including buying sporting equipment.

Timothy Phillips, the Boys & Girls Clubs' director of sports, fitness and recreation, said it's good to know that people on the Hill are passionate about his organization.

"They put together this wonderful event where, surprisingly, the Congressmen play a competitive game all for charity," he said.

The Boys & Girls Clubs partnership began when the clubs were combined with the Metropolitan Police Clubhouses in 2003. The clubhouses were previously run by the Metropolitan Police Department.

For Johnson, it took several years and three different tutors before the WLC's programs started to work for her. Since then, she's remained involved with the organization and has encouraged family members to take literacy classes.

"You can't tell if a person can read just by looking at them," she said. "D.C. has one of the highest literacy problems in the country, and it's great that the game is sponsoring us and helping us address the problem."

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