

# **Buckner partners with Texas Rangers Foundation to strengthen families**

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DALLAS—Buckner International and the Texas Rangers Baseball Foundation entered a partnership to strengthen families in West Dallas by expanding opportunities for boys and girls who use the Texas Rangers MLB Youth Academy.

More than 3,000 student athletes have worked out at the youth academy at the Mercy Street Sports Complex since its official ribbon-cutting ceremony in December, Rangers TV broadcaster Dave Raymond said.

Buckner will establish a satellite Family Hope Center at the academy, where West Dallas families and the larger area can benefit from a variety of programs.

Buckner operates 26 Family Hope Centers throughout Texas and in a half-dozen other countries. Services typically include parenting education classes, job skills training, financial empowerment courses, family counseling and spiritual enrichment.



Albert Reyes, president and CEO of Buckner International, describes how the Family Hope Center at the Texas Rangers MLB Youth Academy in West Dallas will help strengthen families. (Buckner Photo / Aimee Freston)

“Our goal at Buckner is to protect children by strengthening families, and this partnership gives us the perfect opportunity to fulfill that mission,” said Albert Reyes, president and chief executive officer of Buckner International.

During a Jan. 17 dedication ceremony at the facility, Reyes called to mind an iconic scene from *Field of Dreams* and pointed to way simply playing catch can strengthen family ties.

“Baseball has a way of bringing people together like nothing else on the planet,” Reyes said. “We will be using baseball as a way of strengthening families.”

Love for baseball can draw families to the facility where “there are opportunities to expand their vision and their experiences broader than just the field” of play, said Ken Hall, former Buckner CEO and now a member

both of the Buckner International board of directors and the Texas Rangers Foundation.

“One of the visions of this initiative was to be able to reach into families in this community ... and seek to make a difference in the lives of boys and girls who come through here, to help them with all the other kinds of empowerment opportunities offered here,” Hall said.



Pitcher Cole Hamels, representing The Hamels Foundation, emphasized the impact the Texas Rangers MLB Youth Academy will have on giving educational opportunities to boys and girls in West Dallas. (Buckner Photo / Aimee Freston)

The 17-acre sports complex includes five outdoor fields and a training center with an indoor practice field, exercise facilities and classrooms.

The Texas Rangers MLB Youth Academy not only offers children and teenagers year-around baseball and softball instruction and playing opportunities, but also provides access to tutoring and mentoring

programs, healthy lifestyle classes, drug- and gang-prevention programs and college preparation courses.

“This is a facility that can house a lot of wonderful events, bringing the community together,” said Rangers pitcher Cole Hamels. The Hamels Foundation contributed significantly to the four classrooms at the youth academy.

“Just the way this has turned out has blown our minds,” Hamels said. “We know it is going to reach a lot of individuals.”