

ETBU baseball team scores big win in community

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MARSHALL—Not every statistic shows up in a box score. But if volunteer hours in the community appeared alongside batting averages and slugging percentages, the [East Texas Baptist University](#) Tiger baseball team would be champions by any reckoning.



East Texas Baptist University Tiger baseball player Brooks Lloyd gives a “thumbs up,” signaling he is ready to place candy on the line at the fishing booth during a fall festival at First United Methodist Church of Marshall. (Photo by ETBU Baseball) Last year, Tiger baseball accumulated over 350 hours of community service, and Jared Hood, ETBU head baseball coach, noted the team wants to surpass that mark this year.

“You never know who you might influence, who you may help, who you may bring joy and hope to,” Hood said. “I don’t think I have challenged the team to be involved to serve as much as Christ has challenged all of us. If we can influence just one person to follow Jesus Christ, just by showing them the

love that he showed us, then we have done as he commanded of his disciples.”

Last month, the team helped J.H. Moore Elementary conduct a fall festival for students and their families at the invitation of Tiffany Stevenson, a teacher at the school and an ETBU graduate.



The East Texas Baptist University Tiger baseball team volunteered their time to help serve hotdogs to the students of Washington Early Childhood Center and their families. (Photo by ETBU Baseball) “The team was in charge of setting up and manning around 20 different booths for the kids to participate in,” Hood said. “There was a cake-walk, ring-toss, ball-toss and some face-painting booths that our 40 players had a blast doing.”

In addition to volunteer service at the fall festival, the Tigers are involved in an ongoing mentorship program at the school, located near the ETBU campus.

“For the past four years, every one of our players has been assigned a student to mentor,” Hood said. “The players go to the campus and meet at least once a week during lunch, reading or recess periods to mentor their student.”

The ETBU student-athletes make a big impression on the elementary school students, Principal Melinda Jennings said.

“Not only do the baseball players impact the students they mentor, but the other students love to see them, as well,” Jennings said. “We want our students at Moore to see that there is a future beyond high school, and it is possible right here in Marshall. This program gives many of our young men the opportunity to have a male role model in their lives that is positive and motivating.”



East Texas Baptist University Tiger baseball players (left to right) Logan Sprinkle, Luke Pickrell and Hudson Arrant serve food at the J.H. Moore Elementary fall festival. (Photo by ETBU Baseball) Several team members emphasized how much they enjoy the opportunity to put their Christian faith into action through service.

“I love the mentor program we do at J.H. Moore,” Tiger outfielder Zach Ervin said. “Personally, going into the community to serve is what we are called to do as Christians. It gives me a sense of satisfaction but also pushes me to serve as Jesus served.”

Connor Combs, a junior who plays second base, noted how the students “light up” when he walks into the elementary school each Tuesday.

“We are there for about an hour, and we just hang out with our buddies and talk,” Combs said. “We talk about school, their behavior, their friends—anything they need help with. It is amazing how simple conversation and your presence can mean so much to these kids, and it is another way for us to be a light in the community.”

The team also assisted First United Methodist Day School at the congregation’s fall festival, and they participated in a 9/11 Heroes Run benefiting the Travis Manion Foundation, served 160 people at Mission Marshall, took part in a fund-raiser for Marshall High School and served hot dogs to children and families at Washington Early Childhood Center.

“By serving in the community it gives us as a baseball team a positive outlook and relationship with the Marshall Community,” Ervin said. “It is good for the team to develop a habit of service as a part of this team. It is so much more than playing baseball. It’s developing a brotherhood that looks and walks like Jesus does.”

In the weeks ahead, team members will unload delivery trucks for the United Churches of Marshall Food Pantry and continue their mentoring program at Moore Elementary.

“There is always a good feeling you get when you know you are helping someone, but that’s not why we are out in the community,” Combs said. “Tiger baseball goes out in the community because we know as believers in Jesus Christ, we are called to be the hands and feet for the kingdom, and we do that by serving in a community that desperately needs to see that love.”

Combs and Ervin both believe they are blessed to be a part of Tiger baseball, which has a broader purpose than playing games.

“Yes, we want to win games and even championships,” Ervin said. “But our emphasis on discipleship and building community throughout Marshall is of that same importance. The Lord is doing cool things among this team.”