

VISITING HOSPITALIZED CHILDREN

By Ashley Burns

DESCRIPTION:

Proudly sporting their school's green and white, 20 FCA athletes from Wagner College (N.Y.) entered Staten Island University Hospital with one goal: bringing joy and hope to the pediatric ward.

The idea for the outing was sparked last December when the Wagner Huddle met with members of the football team to discuss ways they could impact the community.

"As student-athletes at Wagner, we feel blessed to have the opportunity to be on scholarship and to play at the Division-I level," said Christian Hanna, the Wagner FCA Huddle Leader. "We knew we wanted to make a difference locally, so we came up with several ideas and finally decided we wanted to reach out to hospitalized kids."

Only a five-mile drive from the Wagner campus, Staten Island University Hospital was the perfect location. On the ride over, Wagner athletes prepped themselves for what they would experience at the hospital. Although some athletes initially felt "out of their element," each was eager to share the joy of Christ with the children.

When they got to the hospital, the Huddle entered the children's wing, divided into smaller groups, and began rotating through the rooms. Some athletes brought mini footballs and played catch with patients while others simply

chatted with the kids. All, however, conveyed the love of Christ through their actions.

"As college athletes, the Lord has blessed us with the ability to do certain things," Hanna said. "At Huddle meetings, we often talk about Luke 12:48*. That verse reminds us that, as privileged individuals, much is expected of us, and part of that includes giving back to the community."

Since the Huddle's visit to the hospital, Wagner's FCA has hosted several events to raise awareness for the hospital's needs. One of the most popular was a bone marrow drive, which drew the participation of more than 300 Wagner students. The most powerful impact, though, may have been on the Huddle members themselves, who, through the process, were reminded of the power of influence.

"When I was kid, I envied every big-time athlete in the world," Hanna said. "I saw these big, strong guys, and they had this aura that they could do anything. I'm sure that is how those kids look at us, and that kind of influence can be used in a powerful way for Christ."

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* "...Much will be required of everyone who has been given much. And even more will be expected of the one who has been entrusted with more." - Luke 12:48

ACTION STEPS:

PREP WORK

- Contact a local hospital and ask for permission to visit the children's ward.
- Choose a date that works for both the hospital and the Huddle.
- Collect items (e.g., candy, balloons, miniature footballs) to donate to the children.
- Divide Huddle members into rotation groups.
- Prep the Huddle for the various medical conditions and situations they will encounter.

EVENT

- Select a place to meet before entering the hospital.
- Pray together as a Huddle before you begin.
- Send rotation groups to different parts of the hospital.
- Distribute donated items to the children.
- Play games and converse with the children.
- Pray with the children and families who ask or who are willing.
- Pray as a Huddle before returning to campus.

ADVICE

"To get a bigger turnout, consider promoting the idea to the school and opening it up to other students outside the Huddle."

— Christian Hanna,
Wagner College Huddle Leader

RESULTS

"Once you walk in there, you realize how much you take life for granted. It was one of those gut-check kind of moments but we were happy to be there and to make a difference."

— Hanna

Need more resources for your Huddle?

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Courtesy of Christian Hanna

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