

Youth Team of Week: Lower Bucks Lacrosse sells Wings tickets for fallen officer's Memorial Fund

By Chris Goldberg
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The Lower Bucks Lacrosse League's fifth- and sixth-grade youth boys' team is finding a way to bring something positive to a most tragic event.

This Saturday the team will join to honor fallen Middletown Township police officer Chris Jones at the Philadelphia Wings' game at the Wachovia Center. The squad - the season's first **141Lacrosse Youth Team of the Week** - is selling tickets to the National Lacrosse League contest to raise money for the Officer (Det.) Chris Jones Middletown Township Memorial Fund.

Officer Jones, a 10-year veteran of the Middletown force, was struck and killed while conducting a traffic stop on Route 1, near the I-95 interchange on Jan. 29. The fund will provide for the future education of Officer Jones' three children.

The Lower Bucks coach is Paul Deppi, a 10-year veteran of the police force of nearby Newtown Township. Deppi, who helped found Lower Bucks Lacrosse 16 years ago and has continued to coach, felt the team's fundraiser was the ideal way to teach his players about giving to the community by honoring a true leader.

"Since I have been coaching I have tried to incorporate life lessons," said Deppi, who was recognized as one of the "Real Heroes" by the Lower Bucks chapter of the American Red Cross two years ago. "I try to teach them about being gentlemen and scholar-athletes while behaving themselves.

"We've had some Middletown Township officers send their kids through our youth league program and when Officer Jones got killed we had just started tryouts.

A lot of the kids asked, 'Did you know him?' Yes, I told them I worked hand-in-hand with those officers and it kind of hit hard.

"We wanted to do something to get involved."

For every ticket the team sells, \$5 goes to the memorial fund; simple donations also are being sought. The team already has raised over \$500 for the Wings' game against Toronto. The game begins at 7:30 p.m.

The Lower Bucks players also will be invited to go down to the field before the game with Officer Jones' wife, Suzanne.

Deppi said he first began playing lacrosse when he was an undergrad at Ohio State. He said the sport helps him to teach the same values he preaches as a police officer and even helped him to decide to join the force.

"I am trying to teach kids there is a little more to life and other things they can do that are good rather than spending \$5 on I-tunes," he said. "This is a really good cause; and they have taken this one.

They want to raise awareness for the fallen officer. The kids have done a great job talking to families and reaching out to their aunts and uncles. We want to get as many people out there as possible.

"I first became an officer because of my connection with youth lacrosse. I even proposed to my wife in front of the team. The sport has been phenomenal to me. All 16 years have been a lot of fun.

This sport is making the next teachers and lawyers and police officers and even vice presidents. You want to see kids excel, but more importantly you want them to be better grown-up men."



The Lower Bucks Lacrosse 5th- and 6th-grade youth team is raising money for a memorial fund for the children of a fallen Middletown Township police officer by selling tickets for this Saturday's Wings game at the Wachovia Center. The team is the season's first 141Lacrosse Youth Team of the Week. Coaches include (back, from right) Paul Deppi, Jerry Price and Tom Romano



