



Dodgeball For A Cause – Gabriele Fitness and Performance in Berkeley Heights Hosts Haitian Relief Fundraiser in Latest Show of Charitable Support

By Josh Shreckengost

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BERKELEY HEIGHTS, NJ – As the foam balls whizzed through Gabriele Fitness and Performance in Berkeley Heights yesterday afternoon, one constant was visible as middle school students from all over the area participated in a unique 2-on-2 Charity Dodgeball Tournament.

Inside the facility on Locust Avenue, everyone – parents included – had ear-to-ear smiles spread across their faces. While the kids played, the assembled parents looked on and snapped photos, chatted with one another and laughed. Clearly, everyone involved was having a good time.

The unique idea for a charity dodgeball tournament is the brainchild of Vince Gabriele, owner of Gabriele Fitness and Performance and a graduate of New Providence High School. Spurred on by the earlier success of his previous charity dodgeball tournament – one that was played to raise funds for Berkeley Heights resident and Governor Livingston Middle School student and hockey player Kyle Kramer after he was diagnosed with AML leukemia – Gabriele decided to put the format to work once again, this time to raise funds to contribute to the relief effort that has followed the devastation endured by Haiti after a January 12th earthquake decimated that country. "This is actually our second dodgeball tournament. The first one we did was for a young boy in the area who has cancer and his name is Kyle Kramer," Gabriele said. "We did it for his foundation and we had about 50 kids here in the summertime and it was great, we raised a bunch of money for his foundation. Then when the Haiti [earthquake] happened, we wanted to do our part, raise some more money and let the kids have some fun. All of the proceeds from this will go to the American Red Cross' Haiti Relief Effort, so that's kind of how the idea first came about."

That first tournament to benefit the Kyle Kramer Medical Fund illustrated Gabriele's spirit of service. After 11-year-old Kyle was diagnosed with AML leukemia in March of last year, the Berkeley Heights community came together in different ways to help raise money to offset the costs of Kyle's medical bills. Gabriele decided that he could use his facility – a state-of-the-art fitness and workout center – to host an event that would see nearly 50 kids, ranging in age from grades four through eight, sign up to play.

When kicking around the idea for a second tournament to benefit Haiti, Gabriele thought back to the positive response he received following the first round of dodgeball. "I think the parents love it and one of the reasons we decided to do another [dodgeball tournament] was the feedback we got from the last one we did," Gabriele said. "Parents were e-mailing me and calling me the next day saying what a great thing it was, that their kids had such a great time. The feedback we got from those parents was that everyone had a great time and it is something fun for a great cause."

Great causes are something that Gabriele has been drawn to since his return to the area from a successful stint as Personal Trainer and Director of Football Development at Fitness Quest 10 in San Diego. Having now returned to the area where he grew up, Gabriele has become immersed in the local community on many levels. Both he and head trainer Tom Langton help to train several local high school and middle school teams in the towns of Berkeley Heights, New Providence and Summit.

That connection to local athletes and their families is a key link between Gabriele Fitness and Performance and the community when a situation arises where charitable donations can be raised for worthy causes. "It's very important to be a part of the community. We're always doing stuff here. All of our clients are from the immediate areas of New Providence, Berkeley Heights and Summit so we're always trying to give back in some way because these are the people who make our business go."

Gabriele and his wife Vanessa are also active participants in raising money for breast cancer research through the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure under the company's name. Last year, Gabriele Fitness and Performance had nearly 80 people participate in the walk and raised over \$11,000. This year, Gabriele figures to have even more participants and has listed a target of \$15,000 on the team page of the Komen Race for the Cure website. The cause is just another one of many that Gabriele, his family and his business have set about to better through their service and dedication.

Yesterday's dodgeball tournament was a shining example of Gabriele's commitment to not only charitable works, but to bettering the area's athletes. While one may think of a dodgeball tournament as just a fun day of semi-organized athletics, Gabriele took the opportunity to train the kids involved while promoting the fun and positive aspect of the day's events. "We're having the kids use their non-dominant hand to throw the ball in today's tournament. It helps them to train the side of their bodies that they may not use all that much, especially at a young age. It helps them to get stronger on that side, helps them build equal body strength and coordination. Plus, they can't really drill each other that hard with the ball," Gabriele said with a laugh.

Judging by the turnout, Gabriele had put together yet another successful program for a very worthwhile cause. Certainly, the former New Providence Pioneer football standout has spent countless hours since returning to the area forging relationships that have paid dividends not only

to the charities Gabriele Fitness and Performance helps to serve, but to the local teams and athletes Gabriele and Langton train. "I think the atmosphere [of the dodgeball tournament] is really good. We work with a lot of local teams and we feel like we've really developed a good following here with the youth teams all the way up through the high school level," Gabriele said.

That "good following" Gabriele spoke about is more than just clientele at a gym – it consists of community in the truest sense of the word and it's always on display at 20 Locust Avenue.

Photo above: *Gabriele Fitness and Performance owner Vince Gabriele (right, standing) and head trainer Tom Langton (left, crouching) with the 4th-6th grade players at Saturday's charity dodgeball tournament for Haiti relief which was sponsored and hosted by the gym.*

Photo by Josh Shreckengost



Gabriele addresses the 4th-6th grade players during the 2-on-2 charity dodgeball tournament.

Photo by Josh Shreckengost



Area middle school students participated in a day of dodgeball and training at Gabriele Fitness and Performance in Berkeley Heights.

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