Arizona Post Sponsors Basketball Program

VFW members help children thanks to a VFW Foundation grant

Feb 16, 2016

This article originally appeared in the February 2016 issue of VFW magazine.

For some children, the idea of joining an organized sport is more of a dream than a reality. But today, because of a $500 grant from the VFW Foundation, more than 30 children will play basketball at the Sunnyslope Youth Center in Phoenix— and it took one resourceful VFW Post just two hours to arrange it.

Bill Talcott is a member of Post 9400 and its youth activities chairman. Talcott said he thought of the Summer Youth Basketball League at the center "the second" he heard about the VFW Foundation Community Service Matching Grants program. The program matches up to $500 in funds when a VFW Post contributes to its community. To qualify, funds must be used for beneficial community activities. But programs and organizations don't have to be specifically geared toward troops, veterans or military families. Members have worked with the center, located just across the street from the Post in north Phoenix, for several years, Talcott said. And hearing about the program was perfect timing because they'd already raised $1,000 for

Sunnyslope.

With the VFW Foundation matching up to $500, the Post was able to give a total of $1,500. “We knew it was going to be put to a good cause, and that’s very gratifying,” he said. “The entire intent of this was to help children who otherwise could not have participated.” Talcott, a Vietnam veteran who was an infantry platoon leader in the 82nd Airborne Division, said the total grant application process only took two hours. “It’s not very often you can do something so simple and get $500 to help others,” he said. “We are very pleased.”

It’s a great way for a Post to connect with its community. For members of Post 9400, their relationship with the children is growing by the day. Members regularly attend Sunnyslope basketball games—they wear their VFW hats and other items proudly, Talcott said. As part of offering the children this opportunity, leaders at the center ask that recipients perform some service at the Post. But when the light chores are done, it’s a chance to bond over an ice cream soda the Post provides for the children. It’s a win-win for everyone.

“We’re very appreciative of the VFW Foundation for this grant,” Talcott said. “Everyone is really pleased.” Talcott said helping others was easy thanks to the VFW Foundation Community Service Matching Grants program. “I didn’t even have to go to the Post Office,” he said. “I would really encourage any VFW Post to take advantage of this program—just go ahead and do it.”

Posts are encouraged to apply for the grants. With $95,000 left to distribute at press time, that means a lot of Posts can help their communities. For more information and to apply, visit http:http://www.vfwfoundation.org/grants. The VFW Foundation, founded in 1996, is located at VFW National Headquarters in Kansas City and has a five-person staff.

NOTE: A recent change to the VFW Foundation Community Service Grants program has eliminated the matching donation requirement from the applying VFW Post or Auxiliary, and has also increased available grant amount of up to $1,000.

To access the digital version of VFW magazine, click here: www.vfw.org/News-and-Events/Magazine/.

Photo caption: Children from the Sunnyslope Youth Center in Phoenix, Ariz., thank members of VFW Post 9400 for helping sponsor their youth basketball team. The Post donated $1,500 to the center, $500 of which came from a VFW Foundation Community Service Grant.