



Derek Jeter



Curtis Granderson



J.J. Watt



Kevin Durant

around 2,400 disadvantaged children. Neymar said, "The love I get from the kids, the conversations we have... it gives me strength to return to Barcelona and keep running after more trophies. It makes me happy to do something for the kids and their families." The INJR facility Neymar opened in 2014 and is located in the seafont city of Praia Grande in Sao Paulo state where Neymar spent his childhood. Programs use sports as an educational tool. Neymar and Waves for Water joined to bring clean water to impoverished areas in Brazil as only 48% of rural Brazilian residents had adequate sanitation and 87% had access to improved water, according to WASHFund.org. In 2014, Neymar's celebrity reached a new level when he joined with PayPal and Waves for Water through a global clean water campaign to buy water filters for Brazilian cities with the bonus of a homage to the donors' home countries. Donations from the United States were used to buy water filters for Sao Paulo where the U.S. soccer team stayed during the tournament. And, PayPal partner eBay auctioned off autographed Neymar memorabilia to boost proceeds.

Devastated by the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in his birth land Puerto Rico, Houston Astro baseball legend **Carlos Beltrán** and his wife Jessica founded Fundacion Carlos Beltrán with a \$1 million donation. They set up a CrowdRise page raising \$400,000+ and the money benefited charities in the devastated area. Recovery efforts continue. The hurricane destroyed Puerto Rico's power grid, demolished areas leaving 3.4 million residents without electricity and half without water. Reaching out to the high-profile generosity of those he knew, Beltrán winner of Sports Illustrated's Inaugural Hope Award spoke to Astros owner and shipping magnate Jim Crane who asked, "What do you need?" Beltrán responded, "A plane." Crane chartered three planes for Beltrán to take urgent supplies to Puerto Rico and transport families back to the U.S. Beltrán also contacted hospitals and coordinated transportation back to the mainland for cancer patients needing urgent care treatments. Beltrán partnered with the National Association of Christian Churches, a nonprofit disaster and aid relief organization to distribute additional supplies to 22 towns making several deliveries himself. This nine-time All-Star is truly a hero and continues efforts to assist thousands of people who still lack electricity. He said, "You talk to people without a roof, without power, and you say, 'How are you doing?' And they say, 'We're gonna be O.K.'"

A few years back FOX Sports named Houston center **Dikembe Mutombo** the most generous athlete in the world, and he retired as one of the best shot-blockers in NBA history. The minute the Superstar basketball player stepped onto a court, he started giving money to underserved people. He became a spokesman for the international relief agency CARE, visited Somali refugee camps in northern Kenya, and picked up the tab for the DRC's (Democratic Republic of Congo) track team's uniforms and women's basketball team expenses to

compete in the 1996 USA summer Olympics. Dikembe sponsored basketball clinics for the Special Olympics and worked with troubled youths in Atlanta, Georgia where he lived by supporting Strong STARTS. He established the Dikembe Mutombo Foundation raising funds for a state-of-the-art hospital in Kinshasa honoring his mother Biamba Marie Mutombo. He jumped in with both feet to support a two-week Polio Eradication Campaign in the DRC vaccinating 8.2 million+kids ages five and under. Mutombo gave time and effort serving in the NBA's Basketball without Borders Africa initiative giving on-court instruction, community outreach and educational seminars on HIV/AIDS prevention and other social issues. Efforts by The Dikembe Mutombo Foundation have refurbished dormitories in South Africa at the Ithuteng Trust, a school for underprivileged youths in Soweto. Mutombo took center stage based on his \$15 million+ donation to build a hospital in his native Congo. Retired from basketball his humanitarian work continues. Working with the Make-A-Wish Foundation, HOPE Worldwide, FACE Africa, the ONE Campaign, NBA Cares, Special Olympics, Right to Play, United Nations Development and UNICEF. Mutombo was named as a Special Olympics Global Ambassador, receiving the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health's Goodermote Humanitarian Award, and through his Dikembe Mutombo Foundation he works helping people of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The NBA recognized Mutombo's tireless charity efforts by presenting him with the J. Walter Kennedy Citizenship Award for his countless efforts.

Named Sports Illustrated 2017 Sportsperson of the Year, Houston Texans' defensive player, **J.J. Watt** founded the Justin J. Watt Foundation providing children in numerous

disadvantaged communities after-school athletic programs and opportunities in a safe environment. Watt puts great effort into helping disabled and underprivileged children often inviting groups to games and practices. The three-time NFL Defensive Player of the Year' also launched a fund on YouCaring.com raising money for victims of Hurricane Harvey with the goal of raising \$200,000; the end result: \$37,097,298,00+ given by hundreds of thousands of people. The Walter Payton Man of the Year Award winner's kindness continues through his Foundation which graciously donated to the Students at Fresno's Tehipite Middle School \$20,000+ for uniforms, protective gear and sports equipment. Watt's knack for getting involved in helping the undeserved can be seen across numerous avenues from raising millions to fund after-school athletics throughout Texas, to helping burdened Texas families including those affected by the Santa Fe High School shooting victims, and most notably through the JJ Watt Charity Classic which once again returned in May 2019 to the Minute Maid Park with Watt and along with his teammates, played a HOT game of softball donating all proceeds raised to provide funding for middle schools across the country that have insufficient or no funds available to offer kids after-school athletic programs. ■



Heather O'Reilly