

Local

Baseball and giving back to one's community

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Many of the children at Community Action Partnership of Kern's Friendship House Community Center couldn't wait to play outside after a long day at school, but Thursday was not a regular day at the center.

They'd been given the opportunity to learn something new from a uniquely qualified teacher. Michael McCarthy, a pitcher in the Boston Red Sox's minor league organization, was back in his hometown to share baseball pointers with the kids.

McCarthy, 28, has been playing baseball for 21 years, most recently for the Portland (Maine) Sea Dogs, Boston's Class AA affiliate in the Eastern League. He said his journey has taught him a lot.

Baseball is "one of those things that (allows) you (to) learn something about yourself," said McCarthy. "You learn character and failure, and failure is a really important thing for people. Baseball is filled with failure."

Lois Hannible, the Friendship House's program manager, said McCarthy "just strolled into the center one day" to ask if he could help.

McCarthy said his mission was to teach kids what he has learned over the years, not only about the sport, but also about serving others.

"It's not about the monetary gains or the materialistic good we retain. It's about the way we serve each other in terms of our relationships and humanity," said McCarthy. "That's



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Michael McCarthy, past pitcher in the Boston Red Sox organization and current pitcher for the minor league Portland Sea Dogs, helps Armani Haynes with her baseball glove Thursday at the Community Action Partnership of Kern's Friendship House Community Center during a small baseball clinic.

why we are out here today."

After stretching and warming up with the kids, McCarthy, a CSU Bakersfield baseball alum, joined a few of his former Bakersfield teammates, Mylz Jones, who's in the Colorado Rockies organization, and Oscar Sanay, who's in the Tampa Bay Rays system. They had the kids practice catching and hitting the ball and showed them proper stances and techniques.

Fifteen-year-old Rafael Bruno said he has never played baseball before, but he was ready to learn.

Julian Gutierrez, 11, said

he was excited to learn "the moves, the strategies, and to have fun and to play baseball like a team. We learn teamwork," he said. "There is no 'I' in team." The children were using



Children warm up and stretch at the Baseball Miracles event.

baseball equipment donated by the community. McCarthy hosted a fundraiser in November and raised about \$4,000. He collected about 40 gloves and 15 bats that he will donate to the Friendship House.

After an hour of learning and playing, McCarthy took the 40 kids inside to talk about the importance of service.

He addressed the concepts of "achievement, work ethic, how to set goals and find a way to get to them, even when we experience a setback," he said. "That setback might allow you to take two steps forward — delayed gratification. It's all about life skills."

saw orphans who'd been abandoned and left with nothing. The experience inspired him to give back.

"They don't have much in terms of materialistic goods, but the wealth they carry in their hearts and their smiles and their love for the world around them is absolutely beautiful," said McCarthy.

Thursday's session wasn't just about teaching children the importance of serving others. He wanted to leave them with something else, too.

McCarthy wants children to know "that people care about them, people they have never met," he said. "And that's what a community is all about. We don't always have to see the people who care about us, but we need to know that people do care."

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