

SOURCE: Standard-Times (New Bedford, MA)

DATE: 05-07-2009

HEADLINE: Mentor teams at Friendly Fenway tonight

Source Website

May 07, 2009 6:00 AM

United Front street gang targeted in latest law enforcement sweep in New Bedford Memories of the Big Dan's trial remain vivid Afternoon manhunt ends with arrest of Acushnet man Acushnet man charged in apparent domestic dispute Skateboarding 10-year-old credited with helping New Bedford police nab suspect Grocery store deals for mom Hathaway Elementary student taken into custody for taking knife to school NEW BEDFORD -- Dylan Hernandez loves sports. Football, basketball, baseball -- the Normandin Middle School seventh-grader plays them all and follows professional teams.

Today, he will have the chance to get closer to the action as he takes in the **Red Sox**/Indians game at Fenway Park with his SMILES mentor, Steve Moniz, and hundreds of other people involved in mentoring programs across the state.

Tonight is Mentoring Night at Fenway, and 700 mentors and proteges from across Massachusetts will be at the game.

The **Red Sox** donated the tickets. **Mass Mentoring Partnership**, a statewide organization solely dedicated to strategically expanding quality **youth mentoring** in Massachusetts, organized the event, now in its sixth year.

"We look at it as a celebration of mentoring in Massachusetts," said Chris McCue, director of marketing and mentor recruitment for Mass Mentoring.

For some youngsters, Mentoring Night is their only chance to go to a big-league game, she added.

In addition to watching the game and spending time together, many of the mentor pairs are involved in the pregame ceremonies, such as singing the national anthem, reading the starting lineup and throwing out the opening pitches, McCue said.

Locally, Big Brothers and **Big Sisters** of Greater New Bedford and SMILES, a local, school-based mentoring program, will be among the groups represented, with 48 mentors, proteges and programming staff attending the game, riding together on a coach bus to Boston.

Nicole Almeida, director of resource development for SMILES, said Mentoring Night is one of the most popular activities SMILES participates in.

"This is an opportunity for mentors to see their students outside of the school" and build their relationship in different ways, she said.

Dylan and Moniz, his mentor, got to attend Mentoring Night last year, as well.

"It was fun," Dylan said. "We watched the baseball game and we went to the gift shop."

Dylan said being part of SMILES has been a positive experience and he enjoys the time he spends with his mentor.

"He's a fun guy," he said.

Moniz, the art director for the New Bedford–based Nameplates for Industry, said SMILES has broadened his interests to include things Dylan loves.

"I'm very interested in music and cultural things, and Dylan's very sports–oriented --- and I'm not," he said.

"I'm learning to appreciate some of the things that I didn't appreciate so much before," and with any luck, Dylan is having the same experience, he said.

Moniz got involved with SMILES almost two years ago at the urging of a coworker.

Each week, he spends an hour with Dylan at Normandin, often doing activities that lead to discovery about oneself.

Moniz did not think he would be able to handle interacting with middle–schoolers, but he was wrong.

They are eager to listen and share ideas, he said.

"It's very gratifying," he said. "What I enjoy the most is seeing them so happy."

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Highlights: Red Sox, Mass Mentoring Partnership, youth mentoring, Mass Mentoring, Big Sisters