



Fort Lauderdale FAVORITES

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A Publication of
The Riverwalk Trust
Volume 7: No. 2
March 2010



MARCH 2010 25

GIVE FORT LAUDERDALE

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Former NFL Star Guides Pompano Beach Youth To A Better Life

Henri Crockett has seen his life come full circle.

Growing up in a rough section of Pompano Beach in the 1980s, he rose above the challenges and distractions of a gritty street life to become a premier football player at Pompano's Ely High School, Florida State University and eventually in the NFL with a nine-year career as a linebacker for the Atlanta Falcons and the Minnesota Vikings.

And now he's back on the streets of South Florida doing what he loves to do best: Giving back to the community by mentoring other Pompano Beach youths who face the same temptations and challenges he did growing up poor and African-American in a single-parent household.

Crockett started the South Florida-based Crockett Foundation in 2000 with the help of his brother Zack, also a former NFL star, and O.J. Santiago, a fellow teammate whom he befriended while playing with the Atlanta Falcons.

The foundation's mission is to provide educational opportunities, increase health awareness and inspire today's youth to overcome social limitations and realize their full potential by becoming productive members of tomorrow's global community.

"Growing up in the 'hood,' you had a distorted view of what success represented," Crockett said. "Usually, it was the drug dealers, prostitutes and petty criminals who made quick easy money, but obviously they were on the wrong side of the law."

Crockett stressed the importance of having a role model to look up to, someone who can pull your mind away from that type of thinking

and show you that success is attained from hard work and achieving your fullest potential.

"I had an early mentor in high school (Dr. Daniel Kanell, a current orthopedic physician with both the Miami Dolphins and Florida Marlins) who kept showing up in my life to help me with both school studies and sports," Crockett said.

"I'm not sure what he saw in me, but before I knew it, I was working harder than ever to please him and make him proud because he had an interest in me. That's the beauty of having a mentor," he said.

Crockett caught the philanthropic bug at Florida State where he says legendary football coach Bobby Bowden helped him organize his first clothing drive.

"He drove to it, helped find other donors and really got behind it," Crockett said. "It was the first time I really saw excitement in people's faces when they received something others were ready to trash, and that instilled my drive to give back."

While playing with the Atlanta Falcons, Crockett started his first foundation called "Team '94" whereby he gave his word to 26 at-risk kids that he would mentor them from middle school age until college graduation. Of those, 16 actually graduated college and four others went back to college thanks to Crockett's guidance and commitment to them.

When he retired from professional football in 2005, Crockett moved back to South Florida to devote all his attention to the Crockett Foundation.

Influenced by his mom's diabetes, the foundation began offering concerts that had the side purpose of providing health screenings for diabetes, prostate cancer and other health ailments.

The Second Annual Crockett Foundation Family Health & Community Festival will be held Aug. 7 at the E. Pat Larkin Community Center in Pompano Beach. The festival will offer free and low-cost health awareness, educational screenings and immunization shots to help socio-economically challenged communities.

In addition, the foundation annually unites hundreds of local youth with dozens of NFL players from around the country as a part of its free Life Skills Clinic and Football Camp which provides life-building skills while creating potential college scholarship opportunities for participating youths.

For more information about the Crockett Foundation, to donate or more information about its various events, please call (954) 200-1924 or visit www.crockettfoundation.org.

THE WASIE FOUNDATION

A Philanthropic Legacy

Give Fort Lauderdale is made possible through the continued support of The Wasie Foundation (www.wasie.org), an organization committed to positively impacting communities through philanthropy. The foundation believes passionately in community building through giving and volunteerism and encourages others to contribute in whatever large or small ways they can.