

# Team Building Through Huts to Homes

Roger Lipelt

Three years ago after a coaching career of 32 years that included stops as a head coach at West Concord(now Triton), Worthington, and Wayzata, I was comfortably retired. When I got the call asking if I might be interested in starting a football program at Providence Academy. I found that I had some fuel left in my tank. I don't know if you are familiar with Providence Academy, but I had driven by it and one look at the facility is enough to interest anyone. It is the most beautiful school that I have ever seen. I was interested to see if the inside was as nice as it appeared from the outside. I found that it was even better and the leaders were even nicer than the facility.

Located just a mile down the road from Wayzata, my home for 21 years, was this private, Catholic school. It had no players, no equipment, and no field. If the lack of a challenge were a problem for an old coach this would solve it. Talk about team building! This was the ultimate. What we did possess was an administration that had a defined mission and wanted excellence in all things. They asked what I always thought football does best—produce fine young men. We have all heard the quote, "does not produce character; it reveals it". The question facing our staff, which included Ken Zwach, Jim Lewis, and Keith Schafer from our former staff as Wayzata, was how to make our young men take courage when facing opponents who would be stronger and more experienced in the game of football and keep their heads held high and show Lion Pride.

In our first season, we played a junior varsity schedule, which allowed us some success but in year two we started a varsity schedule in the Gopher conference and played three teams which were ranked in the top ten in the state. We learned the agony of defeat. As we entered last fall our schedule was even tougher and some of our athletes had decided that football was too difficult for them to make the sacrifice it would take to reach excellence. We wanted something that would bring out team together and

allow the character of our young men to emerge. We found it in our Huts to Homes Project, which allowed us as a team to build a home for a needy family in Lima, Peru. David Stavros, who was a former Wayzata coach and now serves as a missionary in Peru, coordinates this program. The task was to raise \$10,000,



which would be used to build an entire home, which would include running water and a bathroom for a family that was living in a dirt floor hut without running water of sanitation.

The first thing that we did last fall was to show our young men videotape that introduced the family to them. We told them that what they were about to do would stay in their hearts for the rest of their lives. They would make a difference to someone else in need and they would do it together. Not only would we be giving a home to someone but also a local builder using local labor that would help furnish jobs to unemployed workers would build the home. Throughout the fall, we had several work projects. We did odd jobs for our school parents, sold concessions and spirit wear, held a special football clinic for our lower

school students and held a food drive to stock food shelves at Interfaith Outreach in Wayzata.

The results were amazing! First of all, I found our faculty gained a new appreciation for our football program. Faculty members came forward with suggestions and help. Our administration did everything that it could to support us. School parents who did not even have young men participating in football came forward with help. The local media (newspaper and television) picked up on what we were doing and in a time when the only news about athletics seems to be bad news; they featured our team and our efforts to reach out to others. And finally, our young men responded in a very positive way. It bonded our young men with a positive purpose. I will never forget one of our captains at the homecoming pep fest stating to the student body how proud he was that the team was making a difference.

What I think we are accomplishing is the establishing of a base on which we will build our team. It starts with a philosophy that the Providence Academy Football Lions are a class operation that is unique. We will make a difference for our school and community and take pride in being the best that we can be in all things. Young men want to be associated with something good and they now are more willing to work to, as a price that they have to pay, to contribute toward our success.

Any coaches who would like to join us can contact me. I would like to spread this idea throughout the state. Can you imagine the national attention if Minnesota football teams cooperated in a project like this?

Contact me at:

Roger Lipelt  
740 Quantico Lane  
Plymouth, MN 55477  
Phone: 763-473-5549  
Email: rlipelt@comcast.net