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West New York school welcomes former Giants football star for talk with 115 students about nutrition, exercise, good heart health - and shooting hoops

Wednesday, March 16, 2011

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WEST NEW YORK - With former Giants wide receiver Amani Toomer looking on, students from West New York Middle School participated in a basketball shot contest to raise funds for the American Heart Association.

"This helps me become more a part of the community because these are the kids that are around where I live," said Toomer, 36, a Weehawken resident.

The American Heart Association conducted the event in conjunction with NFL Play60, a program that encourages middle-schoolers to get involved in a physical activity for at least 60 minutes a day.

Students were asked to bring a \$5 donation to the American Heart Association, Assistant Principal Brian Cooney said, and the reward was getting the final two periods of the day to participate in the event.

A total of 115 students, a mix of seventh-and eighth-graders, raised \$575 for the AHA.

"We found a way to reach students by giving them a little competition and also help people with heart problems," Cooney said.

The goal of the program is to encourage kids to be active in their daily lives and continue with good nutrition.

"This is fun since you get to exercise and play basketball a lot," said Koby Garcia, an eighth-grader at the school. "I have health this marking period and don't take gym so this is a good replacement.

At the conclusion of the event, Toomer gave words of encouragement to students, some of whom are fans.

"I am a fan of the Giants so I appreciate it that he came and I could tell my family I saw one of the Giants players," said Arlene Ruiz, a seventh-grader.

Toomer spoke about staying physically fit and about the value of nutrition while understanding the technology that kids are exposed to these days.

"Kids should try to get away from the computer games and be active, but honestly I don't know what it'd be like if I grew up with the Internet," Toomer said....



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