

# Wiffle® Ball Tournament demonstrates community, purpose



Volunteers Julia Canto class of 2022 (same as Luke), Nadine Canto, and Luke Roux Foundation Board Members Terri Valleria and Meredith Bartholomay.

By Ryan Jainchill  
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The Luke Roux Foundation hosted its first annual Wiffle® Ball Tournament on the grounds of the Farmington Little League Fields on June 21. This event, comprising 92 players divided across 16 teams, numerous volunteers and spectators, was a heartfelt and vibrant demonstration of community and purpose.

The event, which was held on the fields Luke Roux grew up playing baseball on, featured 35 Wiffle® Ball games, a home run derby for both children and adults, music, a magician, a raffle and face-painting. The tournament, won by The Fireballs, a team of recent Farmington High School graduates, showed determination and sportsmanship in all their games en route to victory.

Zac Jainchill, the captain of The Fireballs, said winning the tournament meant a lot to his team, many of whom knew Luke from playing baseball in town.

"For me and my team, it was cool to just be out there and to support a good cause and to win the whole thing was definitely special," Jainchill said.

For Jainchill in particular, his relationship with Luke

went beyond just baseball. Growing up in the same neighborhood, Luke was there for many of Jainchill's fondest memories.

"Growing up, Luke was often at my house. I learned to ice skate with him in his backyard, and we'd always play Wiffle® Ball together in our backyard when we had our field set up. It's nice that the Roux family put together the tournament in his honor," Jainchill said.

The day was just four days before the three-year mark of Luke's passing on June 25, 2022. That day, while driving home from a summer baseball game, Luke was hit at an intersection by an intoxicated driver just a few miles away from his home in Farmington.

In the wake of the tragedy, Luke's parents, Carri and Steve Roux, created the Luke Roux Foundation. This foundation aims to "reduce fatalities caused by impaired driving today and eliminate them tomorrow." It supports a message of having a plan when going out to ensure no one drives impaired and encourages others to do the same.

Carri, who took the lead in promoting and gaining sponsors for this fundraiser, said the support from the local

community helped make the day what it was.

"I was humbled by the number of people that came out, and I was very happy watching the games take place, and just how it seemed everybody was having fun and really getting into the tournament," Roux said.

Carri said the community of Farmington and the local area coming together for this event was beneficial in spreading the message as well as uniting the group.

"We wanted to do something that was community-based, so our message would be heard and spread," Roux said.

The game of Wiffle® Ball has been passed down for generations. As a game that only requires a ball and a bat, its simple nature allows it to be played anywhere. Carri said the decision to make the event a Wiffleball tournament stemmed from Luke's enjoyment of the game.

"It was the perfect blend of a sport that anyone could easily get into, as opposed to something like a baseball tournament. I know Luke played Wiffle® Ball, a game he often enjoyed with his friends, using their imagination to create their own made-up World Series. Being at the Little League fields,



Team Fireballs and Team Wiffle House after the championship game.



where Luke started playing from kindergarten all the way up, made it even more meaningful as well," Roux said.

Selecting a game that holds nostalgic value for many was part of the foundation's effort to promote and grow this event. By having a Wiffle® Ball tournament, the foundation aimed to unlock those memories while promoting its message.

"So many people just picked up the bat and smiled, flooded with memories from when they were kids," Roux said.

When asked how the event ties in with the foundation's message, Carri said the event is another way to promote the Luke Roux Foundation's message: always make your transportation plans before taking that first drink.



Andriana Donlon, volunteer face painter

"Another goal was to raise money so we can continue our efforts around education and awareness, continue and grow our SafeGrad SafeRide program and advocate for the technology needed to finally prevent anyone from driving impaired. We also plan to work with corporations and the government to drive meaningful change," Roux said.

Carri and the foundation hope to make this an annual event, with Jainchill and The Fireballs looking to reclaim their title next year.

See more about the foundation at <https://lukeroux.com/>

*Editor's Note: We thank Ryan and the Luke Roux Foundation for this story. In the interest of full disclosure, please note that Ryan and Zac Jainchill are brothers and neighbors to the Roux family.*