

A goal of giving

Through his 14-year soccer career, junior Dylan Taylor realized that not every youth athlete has the same means to compete. In an effort to close this inequity, Taylor created PELOTA.

Weston Chance and Emiliano Mayo

Lacing up his cleats, he felt thankful. Thankful to play the sport he loves. Thankful for his family and for his teammates. But looking around the bustling tournament grounds, he realized not everyone was so lucky.

Junior Dylan Taylor has played soccer all his life, and like many other Marksmen, he has never had to worry about being provided with the proper equipment to play. But through his many experiences in different leagues with different teams, Taylor realized that many players were lacking the proper equipment like cleats and shin guards. Seeking to help players like these, Taylor created PELOTA.

“PELOTA, which stands for Positively Enriching Lives of Tomorrow’s Athletes, is dedicated to furnishing sports gear and educational supplies to economically disadvantaged children,” Taylor said. “Named after the Spanish word for “ball”, PELOTA operates on the principle that fostering youth engagement in sports cultivates essential character traits such as leadership and teamwork.”

PELOTA tackles these objectives through three main methods: paid youth soccer camps, free youth soccer camps and charity drives.

“The paid camps use fees paid by participants to buy sports gear and school supplies for donation to charity,” Taylor said.

The paid camps were the first step for Taylor in kick starting PELOTA, as he needed to gain revenue to develop other branches of the organization. In Spring of 2023, Taylor began going door to door in an effort to locate potential clients for the paid camps. While it required some serious effort, Taylor eventually found a number of interested parties, including multiple St. Mark’s Lower Schoolers. With the revenue from the paid camps, Taylor was able to begin running free camps.

“The free camps are run for kids who cannot afford to pay, and the participants are provided with equipment collected by PELOTA,” Taylor said.

While the camps are great for the personal interaction and coaching they provide, the charity drives play a huge role in collecting equipment to donate.

“I am currently on my second charity drive at my old middle school,” Taylor said. “We ask for any gently used sports equipment and any school supplies.”

The items collected at drives and camps go to communities like Casaview Elementary School, a main beneficiary of PELOTA. Donations of soccer equipment, clothes and school supplies help to make students feel more comfortable and well-equipped for school. PELOTA has also provided items like toothbrushes and Christmas books. Casaview PE teacher Elizabeth Hill has witnessed first hand the joy the donations bring to her students.



SAM LIGHT

IN ACTION Junior Dylan Taylor runs one of his first PELOTA camps at Northridge Church Field.

“My students love getting the donations Dylan has delivered,” Hill said. “These things seem like a given in life, but to some of my students, this was a means to clean clothes and a way to feel proud of their appearance.”

Not only does PELOTA work to simply provide material goods for children, but it also strives to promote positive character development.

“PELOTA will change the trajectory of their life by opening their eyes to sports,” Hill said. “Soccer is not only individual talent, but teamwork.”

Hill, like Taylor, believes that the impact of PELOTA could be what these kids need to bring a brighter future to their lives.

“He is out there making a difference and as long as he continues this journey, PELOTA will continue to change lives,” Hill said.

Aside from schools like Casaview Elementary, PELOTA has also worked with charities like the Chosen Children Village Foundation and St. Vincent de Paul.

Because of his Filipino heritage, Taylor is especially passionate about his work with the Chosen Children Village Foundation, an organization in the Philippines that provides mentally or physically disabled children who were abandoned with a home for life. PELOTA has shipped school supplies and various other items to the village to benefit its schooling system.

While PELOTA is already involved with a lot of different communities and organizations, Taylor believes he is just getting started.

“I hope to increase the number of free camps we offer to needy children in the DFW area, and I am considering expanding into different sports like football or basketball,” Taylor said.

Taylor hopes to increase the number of paid camps and charity drives he runs by familiarizing the St. Mark’s community with PELOTA.

“When I go to college, I hope to eventually pass on this organization to someone who’s really dedicated to it,” Taylor said, “and I think there is nobody better than a fellow Marksman.”