



July 2020 Terriers bouncing back to play ball — followed by a year of safely managed programs supporting wellness. COURTESY PHOTO / COMMUNITY INVESTORS

President’s Council recognizes local nonprofit

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Community Investors, a Wellesley based nonprofit, was recently recognized by the President's Council on Sports, Fitness, and Nutrition (<https://health.gov>) and the U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion as a National Youth Sports Strategy Champion for their work supporting community-based recreation. Community Investors received a digital NYSS Champion badge that signifies this prestigious award and continues to be committed to their support of the NYSS by facilitating free, afterschool sports for K-12 grade students throughout the greater Wellesley-MetroWest region. To be eligible to become an NYSS Champion, an organization must demonstrate interest in, understanding of, and experience with supporting youth sports, must have an organizational or corporate mission that is aligned with the NYSS vision, and must agree to sign a letter of understanding with ODPHP, which will set forth the details of how the organization is supporting the vision of the NYSS.

According to Joe Roberts, founder and executive director of CI, “as our town and nation prepares for much needed healing, and the strengthening of our physical, social and emotional wellness, we must refocus attention to pre-pandemic, youth epidemics lurking below society’s radar.”

Furthermore, he said, “the

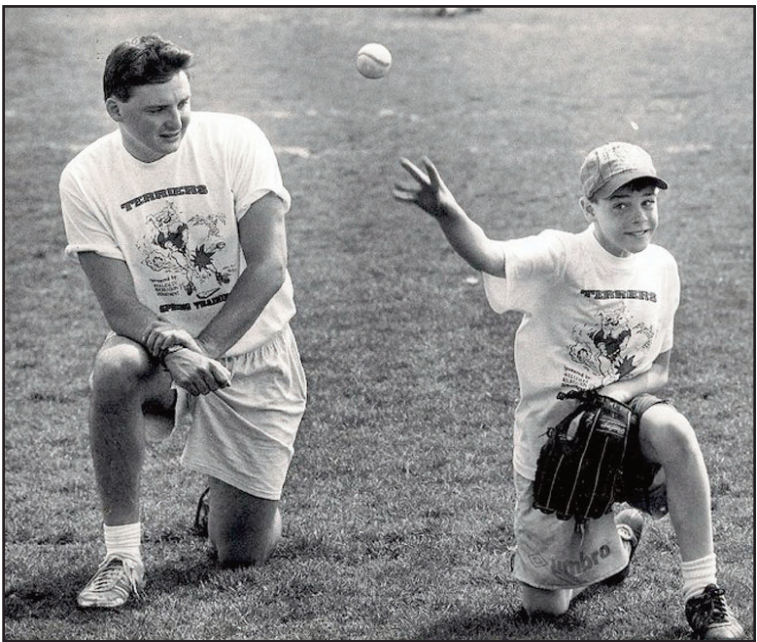
emergence of smartphones, social media, the internet, and video games have resulted in growing electronics addiction, interpersonal social retraction, inactivity and obesity that are all profoundly affecting our youth at increasingly earlier ages. Simultaneously, decreasing trends in recreation, a critically needed source of physical, social, and emotional development, have created a ‘perfect storm’ further intensified by COVID-19 resulting in spiking increases in youth anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts-attempts. All are solvable with organic remedies, but require focus, support and innovation.”

Founded in 2014 by local parents in youth development, teaching, mental health and management, CI’s programs were designed in line with, and are directly supportive of the Challenge Success initiatives, developed at Stanford University and currently serving Wellesley Middle and High Schools. CI’s initiatives were recognized as a “Best Practitioner of Play” by Challenge Success co-founder Denise Pope; in addition, CI’s programs educate students on the benefits of physical activity, the power of musically inspired play, the strength in mindfulness and how balance leads to happiness and wellness. CI has been asked by the Education Committee of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to share their “uniquely inclusive, impactful, active play programs to serve communities throughout the

State.” Inspired and supported by the popular Terriers Sports programs, CI’s PowerPlayRox initiative is developing blueprints of a variety of programs developed over three decades to “serve diverse groups —they have developed a highly innovative formula creating elevated levels of joy, an essential element motivating lasting engagement in active play, a critical need as society competes increasingly with virtual reality,” remarked CI Advisor, Dr. John McCarthy, Director of Boston University’s Athletic Coach Institute.

McCarthy added, “based on studies of music having a positive effect on movement and social-emotional development, their programs are a unique and dynamic fusion of ‘Student Music and Coaching’ programs energizing experiences in the choreographed active play space. They are truly innovators empowering students to lead peers to impactful enjoyment in fun, inclusive and autonomous environments.” Mike McGreal, a founding board member, and mental health management professional said, “we named our initiative PowerPlayRox to capture and share our truly transformational potential.”

Rocking right through the pandemic while many town and school programs were shuttered, CI provided unprecedented, safe services — 314 participants managed active play programs, serving 3,732 elementary school students, 377 middle schoolers, 776 high schoolers and coaches,



What started as baseball program 30 years ago has evolved into year round, fun focused recreation supporting student wellness. Pictured is Joe Roberts coaching one of his first set of students. COURTESY PHOTO / COMMUNITY INVESTORS

as well as 124 music and media participants. CI’s service and designation were featured on WCVB Channel 5 news and continues this spring in a variety of programs serving students ranging from Pre-K through college.

Roberts said, “we have been truly honored to serve our community throughout these historically challenging times and feel honored to have been recognized and awarded for our dedication. We have now been asked by our state and federal governments to bring our programs to every town, city, and school in our state and beyond. We truly believe we have one of the ‘next vaccines’ to

heal our youth and develop lasting wellness — we have a highly scalable formula and are striving to expand our reach to empower teachers, coaches, schools, and organizations by sharing our programs to build and serve all communities. To reach our potential, we are building a team of local resources to help us develop needed capacity. We urge local families, businesses, and foundations to connect and learn with us, to hopefully join our growing team and help us heal and support a happy and healthy next generation.”

For information go to <https://communityinvestors.net>.