

# Lake Washington LIVING

## Aspire! Youth

BY LENIN RODRIGUEZ



**A**spire! Youth was founded by John DeLuca in 2018 at the age of 15. Its mission is to give every kid the opportunity to learn life-long skills through sports. I was lucky enough to catch up with John and ask this phenomenal young man a few questions.

**LWL:** What inspired you to start Aspire! Youth?

**John:** It was during my middle school years at Ascension Catholic School. I asked a friend of mine who enjoyed playing basketball why he didn't play sports for our school. I was shocked at his response. He told me that his family couldn't afford it. It was at that moment that I knew I had to do something. I never wanted a child not to have the opportunity to play sports because of financial limitations.

This young man immediately got to work and was able to launch his non-

profit during his freshman year at Holy Trinity Episcopal Academy. Since then, he has made a difference in the lives of many children. Through his fundraising efforts, he has contributed more than \$13,000 to local youth sports teams. This money is used for sports scholarships for children who would otherwise not have the opportunity to play. It is also used to purchase new sports equipment and send students to sports camps.

To take it a step further, John encourages the students he helps to pay it forward by participating in the patriotic act of saying thank you to the deployed troops and military veterans. Through this effort, these athletes have sent over 10,000 thank you messages to members of our armed forces. This endeavor

has raised more than \$13,000.00 for Operation Gratitude, a separate non-profit organization dedicated to bridging the gap between Americans and their military and first responders through volunteer service projects, and acts of gratitude.

Not bad for a young man who has just graduated high school and is on his way to Notre Dame this fall. When asked if he planned to continue running Aspire, John explained that he would and is expanding to South Bend where he will be supporting John Adams High School to start a Special Ed flag football team. May the luck of the Irish follow him as he continues on this commitment to serve others in every way that he can.