

Grid Classic a Success

Escanaba Daily Pres

By Dennis Grall

ESCANABA - The third annual U.P. Football All-Star Game was a success on the gridiron, and now that has extended off the field.

Rapid River High School's football program and the Upper Peninsula Sports Hall of Fame are among the beneficiaries from the June 26 game in Marquette.

The East won 21-14 when offensive MVP Kollin Jensen of Gladstone caught a 42-yard touchdown pass from Gerrit Mortensen of St. Ignace with 4:42 to play.

Rapid River and Houghton High School each received \$1,000 donations for their football programs. The schools are drawn randomly and new recipients will be selected each year until all U.P. teams have been chosen.

"In years to come we hope to grow the game and the ability to give even more back to the communities of the U.P.," said organizer Todd Goldbeck of Excel Sports.

He said a future goal is to annually provide \$1,000 donations to one school in each of the five U.P. conferences. The school decides how the money will be used to help the football program.

The two all-star head coaches, Todd Kangas of Manistique and Andy Crouch of Lake Linden-Hubbell, also received the footballs used in practices and the game and split them among their staff.

In addition, the practice jerseys were donated to the Forest Park and Iron Mountain programs.

The U.P. Sports Hall of Fame received \$500 for the scholarship program. Four U.P. student/athletes receive annual \$500 stipends from the Hall over their four-year tenure.

The game also provided donations to Beacon House in Marquette, with players collecting more than 600 pounds of non-perishable items for the food pantry.

Family members of hospital patients stay at Beacon House. "Often times, our guests arrive here due to a medical emergency with nothing more than the shirt on their back," Beacon House manager Kellie Barry-Angeli said in a news release.

"Our pantry ensures that these families will get food to maintain their strength during their time of need."

Goldbeck said, "we are very excited for the continued success of the game, and are happy to be supporting these worthwhile U.P. charities and schools."

"When it is all said and done, I think the all-star game did very well this year. We gave back to several different groups and the players had fun throughout the week. That is what the game is all about."

The fourth annual game will be June 25, 2011 in Marquette.