



50 Years Serving Youth

OMAHA, NEBRASKA, UNITED STATES, September 17, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- 50 Years Serving Youth

Coming up on 50 years, Omaha Nebraska saw the birth of a small miracle. Robert McIntyre, Bob Bostwick, Ray Osborne, Ken Carlson, Jim Hicks and their wives were all busy parents. They wanted their kids to be able to play tackle football, and in North Omaha, that wasn't an option, so they built their own league.

Together they created the Li'l Vikings.

The Li'l Vikings attracted over 400 children its very first year. 'The kids just kept coming.' No one was turned down. McIntyre and Carlson reached into their savings to buy the first round of helmets, pads and jerseys. Soon everyone was involved in after school fundraisers so that no child would be refused.

The incredible turnout was divided into two age groups that played against each other every Saturday morning and the Varsity that played throughout Omaha. The league developed community and camaraderie.

The Li'l Vikings were a league of champions. Three years later, in 1971 they organized the first Cornbelt Bowl, inviting 3 teams from New Jersey to come play a midget football bowl game in Omaha.

The first Corn Belt Bowl was special. It rained for days before the big game reducing the field to pools of water and mud. Coach McIntyre still fondly remembers asking Mayor Gene Leahy if there was any way to move the game last minute to a drier field. The Mayor said, 'Don't worry about it, I have an idea'. The day before the game, Mayor Leahy fired up a city helicopter to hover over the field for hours and blow dry it back into playing condition. Incredible.

The New Jersey players stayed in the Li'l Vikings homes, created bonds with the players and celebrated their new friendship after the game with a banquet honoring the players and coaches.

50 years later and the Li'l Vikings are still playing in bowl games. Bob and June Bostwick are still principals with the league. Hundreds of kids from the tough neighborhood of North Omaha are still sweating it out together under the hot summer sun, clad in pads and jerseys, just like youth teams do all over America.

An electrician, plumber, contractor and local businessmen teamed up with their wives and an incredible host of coaches and volunteers to give these kids a chance to play organized football and do it free of charge.

50 years later, and some of my most vivid memories are from the Li'l Vikings. I learned the values of hard work, self-discipline and respect and those values are applicable in everything I do today. As a player, and on behalf of all the kids who have and will continue to gain from the selfless efforts of America's 'volunteer' coaches, please allow me to reach back and say Thank You!

I am better because of you. America is better because of you. Thank you for sacrificing your time and wisdom for the benefit others!

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