



New Mexico Activities Association Student-Athlete Spotlight

Campos and Ellis Support their Local Hospice

By Tyler Dunkel, NMAA Sports Information Director

Sometimes life comes full circle for people, which is exactly what happened for two Las Cruces High School football players, Andres Campos and Sam Ellis. Both young men saw an opportunity to give back to the local hospice, Mesilla Valley Hospice, a group that at one time was there for both their families.

Campos attended a long snapping camp in Texas during the summer of 2015, where they were doing something similar supporting cancer. The cause touched him so much that before he even left the camp that he mentioned to his father that he wanted to do something similar that would go directly to the Las Cruces community.

"I got the idea at a long snapper camp I went to in Texas over the summer," Campos said. "It was called 'Kickin It for Cancer.' Basically people pledge money to kickers, where every extra point or field goal they make, that money would go to cancer research."

Campos continued by saying, "It thought we owed something more to this community than to just play football on Friday nights. I figured it would be a good idea to try and make a difference in our own community."

As the thought of different charities crossed his mind, Mesilla Valley Hospice continued to be the one that spoke to him. His grandmother passed away a few years back and was cared for by hospice. He felt it would be a good gesture to those who helped her.

"When I first started thinking about which charity we could help, I remembered when my grandmother was sick, hospice was there in her final days," he said. "I have a lot of respect for Mesilla Valley Hospice and the people who work there. You know when someone comes to the hospice facility or you take care of them at home that you will be there with them during their final days. It is a hard job to have. The people there form a relationship with their patients and really show love towards them and their families, before they pass away. I'm very grateful for what they did for my grandmother."

Campos knew that he could not do it alone, so he approached his friend Sam (Ellis) and asked him to join him in the effort to raise money for the local hospice. Ellis jumped at the opportunity and says he was honored that Campos asked him.

"Andres and I have been friends since our freshman year. We have a football team full of guys who would have been willing to help Andres with this project but when he asked me to help him I told him I was honored. He called me one day and said he was going to pick me up in 15 minutes and didn't tell me what it was about. As we were driving, he told me about his idea and asked for me to help him and all I could say was thank you for asking me to be a part of this. We drove straight over to hospice and talked to them and got the okay."

He continued by saying, "People don't realize that someday you will need someone to be there for you and look out for



you and hospice is always there for people in need. This is one of the reasons why we chose hospice.”

To this point, Campos and Ellis have raised over \$3,000 and plan to continue their efforts well into the New Year. At first, Campos and Ellis asked teachers, coaches and administrators at Las Cruces High School to donate and even set up a table at their home football games, asking for donations.

Campos explains, “We started at school with teachers and administrators, handing donation sheets out. We also hit up family members. Because this was more of a big picture cause, we really had the school and family support. The work spread not only around our school but to the other high schools as well. We had a table set up at our home games and fans would make donations there as well. We also had an article in our football program for each game.”

The guys were shocked with the response they received, which proved to them that people do care about making a difference in their community.

“It has been a great experience,” Campos said. “To be honest, I’m amazed at the amount of money we have raised. To get the word out about hospice and all the great things they do for people has been very fulfilling and I’m glad we could help.”

Ellis echoed his friend by saying, “This whole experience has taught me a lot not only about hospice but about people in general. My grandmother was also cared for by hospice during her final days and I too was extremely grateful for what they did for her. This was a way I could show my appreciation to all the people that made her feel comfortable.”

Lorraine Padilla, Executive Director of the Mesilla Valley Hospice Foundation, was the first person the boys spoke to about their plans and was just overwhelmed by their willingness to give back.

“I loved the idea. Our facility is located right across the street from Las Cruces High School and it was just a natural partnership. We were already talking to a couple of other groups from LCHS about teaming up and then a few weeks later, Andres and Sam came to us with their idea.”

She continued by saying, “I think the community has a lot of respect for these two young men. The community was going to back them in whatever they decided to do. Andres and Sam could have chosen anything they wanted but they chose to give back to Mesilla Valley Hospice and we are very grateful.”

Campos and Ellis will graduate this spring and have hopes of playing collegiate football and continuing their education. They also mentioned that no matter where they end up, they both plan to do something similar to help those who help others.