

Drew Stanton High Five Kickball Classic raises funds, spirits

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Jen Hardy of the Atlas Sales team boots the ball for a single during her team's 8-5 win over FireKeepers' Casino on Thursday at C.O. Brown Stadium as umpire Gaylord Stanton looks on.



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Detroit Lions quarterback Drew Stanton acted as neutral pitcher for Thursday's final game of the first annual Drew Stanton High Five Foundation Kickball Classic. The tourney raised money for charities. / Robert Youngs/For The Enquirer

The average person would think twice before going outside to play a game of kickball on a Thursday that saw record-setting high temperatures throughout the day.

Detroit Lions quarterback Drew Stanton and a small community of Battle Creek citizens proved they were the farthest thing from average.

A few hours before the Battle Creek Bombers' home baseball game against the Green Bay Bullfrogs, several people from around the area came out to Bailey Park for the finals of the Drew Stanton High Five Kickball Classic.

"When we first started this, we had no idea how well it would do or what would come of it," said Stanton, a quarterback for the Detroit Lions and a former star at Michigan State. "We figured it would be something nice for the community and for the state. We had no clue that we would do as well as we did and raise as much money as we did."

The tournament raised money for both Drew Stanton's charity as well as charities in Battle Creek. The event started earlier this month with 14 teams. The two that played in the finals were Atlas Sales Budweiser and Battle Creek FireKeepers Casino. And after seven competitive innings, Atlas Sales came out on top, 8-5.

Both teams were made up of employees as well as special needs teens and adults.

"This is only my third time coming out to Battle Creek," Stanton said. "It meant a lot to me to be here and be able to put on this event. And now we're thinking ahead to next year and the new things we can do in order to make the event even better next time."

The kickball tournament was Stanton's idea. He was helped extensively by Vince Pavone, owner of Battle Creek Lakeview Ford car dealership.

"To be honest, I'm really still new to this city," Pavone said. "When I first came out here, I had a vision of being able to give back to the community in a big, big way. So to be able to come out here and see that vision be formed and realized is really something special. And we'll be back. Next year, we're going to make it better."

