

ATTN: News Director/ Assignment Editor
****** Media Release ******

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**Jacksonville Jaguars and United Way Team Up For
Annual Hometown Huddle Day**

JACKSONVILLE, FL—The Jacksonville Jaguars and United Way of Northeast Florida teamed up for Hometown Huddle today at Matthew Gilbert Middle School to provide a day of fitness, as an opportunity to give back to the community, to more than 200 youth. More than 30 Jaguar players joined students, including Derek Harvey (DE), Mercedes Lewis (TE), Brad Meester (C), Ernest Wilford (TE), Clint Ingram (LB) and Justin Durant (LB).

Research indicates that childhood obesity affects one out of three children in the United States. Studies also show students who are physically fit have a stronger self-image, more self-confidence, and demonstrate greater improvement in health-related fitness.

In keeping with the NFL Play60 initiative, which encourages children to be active for at least sixty minutes every day, this year's Hometown Huddle included relays and traditional field games for students participating from United Way's Achievers For Life, a dropout prevention program, and Communities in Schools of Jacksonville's TEAM UP after-school program.

"United Way is pleased to be part of this exciting partnership with the NFL and locally the Jacksonville Jaguars," said Connie Hodges, president of United Way of Northeast Florida.

"Hometown Huddle resonates because it's focused on something every one of us can do—give back

to our local community. And especially this year we're pleased to join the Jaguars in raising awareness about the importance of youth fitness. It's only if we work together to make a collective impact that we will be able to make positive, lasting change in the lives of First Coast children."

Community volunteers from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida and Enterprise Rent-A-Car joined students and players in field games including football agility exercises, soccer drills, track relays, while they learned first-hand from Jaguar players about the importance of staying healthy and active every day.

Over the past ten years, 32 NFL teams have joined local United Ways for Hometown Huddle. During this national day of community service, NFL players put down their shoulder pads and assist people in their communities. On average, more than 300 players, team representatives and their families interact with thousands of individuals who benefit from United Way support.

Now in its 36th year, the NFL and United Way partnership is proof that more can be accomplished collectively than any one group or person can do alone. The NFL and United Way partnership is the most visible and longest running charitable collaboration of its kind. For more than three decades, the partnership has been an example of the tangible good that can be leveraged when two household icons are harnessed into a powerful vehicle for real change in our communities.

United Way of Northeast Florida works to create real, long-lasting change in Northeast Florida by focusing on the building blocks for a good life. In partnership with volunteers, community organizations, and leaders, United Way is creating opportunities to improve life for people in Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau and northern St. Johns counties. In addition, United Way leads United Way 2-1-1, a 24/7 information referral hotline; Life: Act 2, a pro-active response to an exploding senior population; and Full Service Schools, a community approach to removing barriers to academic success. For more information, call 904-390-3200 or visit www.liveunitednortheastflorida.org.

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