



Hempstead PAL lacrosse supported by Long Island business leader

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From left: James C. Metzger, 2012 Metzger Award winner Amara Koroma, 2013 Metzger Award winner Trayvon Alexander, Hempstead PAL Lacrosse Coach Alan Hodish
Credit: Hempstead PAL Lacrosse

Lacrosse is a game that is at the core of [James Metzger](#). An All-American at Half Hollow Hills East High School in Dix Hills and at Hofstra University, he left the game behind for more than 25 years to concentrate on building one of the leading independent insurance and financial services businesses on Long Island.

For the last handful of years, though, the CEO and founder of Garden City's [The Whitmore Group](#) has come back to the game of his youth. Metzger has guided his nephew's collegiate lacrosse career at Cornell University and he has provided financial endowments to support the Hofstra lacrosse program and a lacrosse award at his former high school. Metzger also has supported Long Island youngsters who may not have had the opportunity to learn and play the game.

During the last two seasons, Metzger has championed the Hempstead PAL lacrosse team that plays in the Nassau County Police Activity Lacrosse League. The team includes many first-year players, from the fifth and sixth grades, who are mostly from single-parent households. During its first two seasons, the team of African-American and Hispanic boys has a 16-4 record.

Awards and Inspiration

Metzger met with the youngsters during this year's season ending awards program, and he advised them to respect their efforts as a team and to strive to achieve success in the sport of lacrosse. He explained to the boys that lacrosse can be a wonderful game to play in high school and to pursue at college. [Metzger](#) offered stories about himself and his nephew as examples that hard work and perseverance can lead to success on the lacrosse field along with anything that the boys want to achieve in school, in a career and for the rest of their lives.

Metzger told the boys that his nephew, [Rob Pannell](#), received this year's Tewaaron Award as the nation's most outstanding collegiate lacrosse player. The award is similar to college football's Heisman Trophy. Metzger added that Pannell leveraged his success in lacrosse into an outstanding Ivy League education and a bright future that includes a professional contract with the Hempstead-based New York Lizards of the Major League Lacrosse league.

"Jim Metzger has been an outstanding sponsor and supporter of our youth program," said Al Hodish, coach of the Hempstead PAL team. "Many of our kids need role models such as Jim to inspire them to take advantage of future opportunities."

Trayvon Alexander, a 12-year-old received this season's James C. Metzger Award as the player who "best shows outstanding leadership and a strong work ethic." Last year's recipient, Amara Koroma, also attended the ceremony.

The team presented the annual Michael Piegare Award to 12-year-old L.J. Hough. The award is offered in memory of a Cold Spring Harbor High School and Pace University lacrosse player who died in a motor vehicle accident. The Michael Piegare Foundation supports the award for the player who best displays the character and outstanding attitude that was demonstrated by Piegare in athletics and throughout the course of his life.

“I knew Michael Piegare well,” added Hodish, a Garden City attorney and East Meadow resident who formerly taught and coached varsity lacrosse in the Hempstead School District. “He was a wonderful young man. By presenting this award, Michael’s spirit and legacy will be kept alive.”

A sports program, and especially such a successful one as Hempstead PAL Lacrosse, cannot benefit the youngsters on the field and off without the support and dedication of a committed coaching staff. The players in this program have benefited from top quality instruction from coaches who also serve as role models.

Three former Hempstead High School athletes—James Ford, Lamont Hough and Aaron Jones—serve the program as assistant coaches.

Ford was a three-time All-American lacrosse player at Rutgers University. Hough won the 1989 Thorpe Award as Nassau County’s top football player and played basketball and football at Northeastern University. Jones was the recipient of the 1983 Nassau County Howdy Myers Award that is presented annually to the top lacrosse defensive player. The award is named for a member of the National Lacrosse Hall of Fame who coached at Hofstra. Jones attended Cornell University and twice received All-American honors.

At the awards ceremony, all players, coaches and sponsors acknowledged the contributions of the Hempstead Police Department and Detective Jackie Jones-Ford. As the Hempstead PAL director, Jones-Ford provides guidance and great support for Hempstead’s youth lacrosse players.