



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Camden Health and Athletic Association To launch with \$1 Million of Funding

The Cooper Foundation, Norcross Foundation, and AmeriHealth New Jersey to fund new organization dedicated to creating comprehensive health and athletic programs for Camden youth

(CAMDEN, NJ) - With the goal of strengthening the community and keeping young people healthy and active, a new organization dedicated to expanding health and athletic programs is being created in the City of Camden.

Cooper University Health Care Chairman, George E. Norcross III, today announced the establishment of the Camden Health and Athletic Association (CHAA) to expand and encourage additional health and youth athletic programs for boys and girls in the City of Camden. Initial funding for CHAA in the amount of \$1 million will come from The Cooper Foundation, the Norcross Foundation, and AmeriHealth New Jersey.

Mr. Norcross was joined at a press conference to announce the creation of the CHAA by Daniel J. Hilferty, president and CEO of Independence Health Group, parent company of AmeriHealth New Jersey; Susan Bass Levin, president and CEO of The Cooper Foundation; Congressman Donald Norcross; Camden Mayor Dana Redd; and other local elected officials as well as former Eagles quarterback, ESPN analyst, and founder of The Jaws Youth Playbook Ron Jaworski; former Eagle and five-time Pro Bowl wide-receiver and Eagles' radio commentator Mike Quick; former Phillies centerfielder and recipient of the National League Golden Glove Award Garry Maddox; former Executive Director of the NBA Players Association, football wide receiver with the Redskins and Dolphins, and first African-American to play in and pitch a perfect game in the Little League World Series Billy Hunter, who was born in Camden; ESPN national correspondent Sal Paolantonio; and former Camden athletic stars, including Camden High School basketball star and former Cleveland Cavalier Dajuan Wagner.

“Strong youth athletic programs encourage healthy behaviors, create lasting memories and friendships for children who participate and their parents, and bolster a strong sense of community,” said George E. Norcross III, Chairman of Cooper University Health Care. “The Camden Health and Athletic Association will provide financial and administrative resources to help existing organizations as well as build comprehensive health and athletic programs to serve more young people in Camden.”

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By working with existing recreation organizations in Camden and identifying new opportunities, the CHAA will serve as an umbrella organization to provide centralized administrative resources to create new athletic programs, establish fundraising efforts, develop new sports field and facility capacity and reservation systems, and create centralized purchasing of equipment and uniforms. The CHAA will also focus on developing and supporting community health related programs and coordinate its efforts with the Get Healthy Camden initiative of Cooper's Ferry Development Corp., which was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

"Youth sporting events have played an important role in many of our lives – creating a rich sense of community, building lifelong friendships, and encouraging healthy habits," said Daniel J. Hilferty, president and CEO of Independence Health Group, parent company of AmeriHealth New Jersey. "That's why AmeriHealth New Jersey is proud to support the Camden Health and Athletic Association's mission to keep young people healthy and active through youth athletic and community health programs."

The benefit of youth athletic participation is well documented. A major study by The Aspen Institute's Project Play states that children who participate in athletics are less obese and have healthier eating habits, forty percent higher test scores, lower rates of teen pregnancy, smoking, and drug and alcohol use, and are fifteen percent more likely to attend college. The "Sport for All, Play for Life: A Playbook to Get Every Kid in the Game," study indicated youth participation in sports across America is significantly lower in poor households than high income households and called for a revitalization of community-based league sports programs.

"Bringing people together to strengthen communities and promote healthy living throughout the City of Camden are among our top priorities, and our vision for the Camden Health and Athletic Association is just that – bringing people together and providing resources and expertise to build strong youth athletic and community health programs to benefit more families in Camden," said Susan Bass Levin, President and CEO of The Cooper Foundation.

The Camden County Police and Sheriff's officers have already offered to participate as coaches, umpires, referees, and mentors. As an initial step, the Camden County Board of Freeholders will undertake a comprehensive assessment of all athletic facilities and fields in the City to determine the condition of available venues and identify needs. County and city schools, including Renaissance schools, have agreed to make their sports facilities available for the CHAA sports programs.

The CHAA will be organized as a 501(c)(3), non-profit organization with a corporate board and advisory boards for each sport. The CHAA will enter into a management agreement for administrative support with The Cooper Foundation. The CHAA will begin by hiring an athletic director and its first athletic program will be a soccer league this fall and basketball to follow this winter. Next spring, the CHAA will create baseball and softball programs. Football and wrestling programs are also in the CHAA's future.

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Support for the Camden Health and Athletic Association

(Listed Alphabetically)

Arthur Barclay, New Jersey Assemblyman and former Camden sports stand out:

“Growing up in Camden, I spent hours and hours playing sports, and there is no question I would not be where I am today, or achieved all that I have, without playing sports as a kid. But not every child in Camden has the same opportunity I did and they should not just for their future, but for Camden’s.”

Preston Brown, Football player, Wilson Football Coach, and 2003 Wilson High graduate:

“As a high school coach in Camden, I can see the impact that sports, teamwork and commitment has on students. I see the desire they have to succeed and improve their lives. Youth sports are a big part in developing future leaders that can achieve greatness on and off the field. Programs that focus on improving the lives of our children are important for our community.”

Aaron Burt, Basketball player and 1989 Camden High graduate:

"Of all the things sports have given me, none has been more important than friendships with my teammates. Many of my best friends I have known since I was a kid, playing sports with them and I can't imagine my life without them.”

Carmine Calzonetti, Baseball and Basketball, South Jersey Hall of Fame, Sacred Heart and Gloucester Catholic, Former Assistant Basketball Coach at St. John’s University:

“Sports keep you active, involved, challenges your body, your mind and your character. Sports teaches you to work alone, with others, and take advice to improve. There are no cell phones on first base, computers in the outfield or video games in the dugout. You are engaged, with your teammates to win. But, that does not always happen. What sports does, it teaches you how to bounce back from adversity, and losses. Like life, some days are good and some days are bad, but there is always another day, and another game. And all of us here, are Helping Camden bounce back, because the future looks bright. Let’s play ball!”

Vic Carstarphen, Basketball player and 1986 Camden High graduate:

“I learned so much by playing basketball growing up. It helped me understand the importance of teamwork and trusting others in life. There are so many great lessons to be learned from sports. I support this initiative to help more children in Camden learn these lessons.”

Sheila Davis, Basketball player and 1981 Camden High graduate:

“Playing basketball as a child and in high school had such a positive impact on my life and taught me the importance of working hard, teamwork and responsibility at an early age. Youth sports are such an important part of growing up and being part of a community. Every child should have the opportunity to build friendships and encourage healthy life styles through sports. I could not imagine my life without the opportunities that I had playing basketball in the City of Camden.”

World B. Free, Basketball player, former Philadelphia 76er and Ambassador of 76ers Basketball:

“We believe that sports have the ability to change the world. Sports inspire, teach and challenge all of us. The lessons a child learns today on the court will build character and develop leadership skills that will serve them throughout their lives. It’s our responsibility to support, coach and mentor the next generation of leaders, especially in the areas where our fans live, work and play.”

Billy Hunter, born in Camden, former Executive Director of NBA Players Association, first African American to play in the Little League World Series. First team All-American in football, former wide receiver for Washington Redskins and Miami Dolphins:

"I am proud of where my Camden roots have taken me; never forgetting the foundation that the city provided me in sports and academics; much of my life's success can be traced to the juncture of those two roads. Seeing The Cooper Foundation's commitment toward increasing the exposure to athletics and academics for my hometown youth is an amazing testament."

Ron Jaworski, former Eagles quarterback, ESPN analyst and founder of The Jaws Youth Playbook:

"Playing organized sports as a kid taught me that success isn't about individual achievement, but success comes from working as a team. The teamwork lessons I learned on the playing field are lessons that I've used every day of my adult life, whether on the field, as a broadcaster or as a businessman."

Stacy Johnson, Football player, 1975 Wilson High graduate:

"Through the years, my teammates were like an extension of my own family. I'm so glad even more Camden kids will be able to take part in sports programs now. Kids just need an opportunity and they will excel. This new program will give more children the opportunity to enjoy sports and experience the opportunities that sports provided me."

Garry Maddox, former Phillies centerfielder and recipient of the National League Golden Glove Award:

"Sports has taken me across the country — from California growing up to here on the East Coast where I raised my family — and has given me experiences and opportunities that I dreamed of growing up. And that's why sports are so important for kids: it's more than just dreaming about making a great catch or a clutch hit. It's about how to achieve the things you want in life."

Bryan Morton, North Camden Little League:

"It has been my privilege to work with the children and families of the North Camden Little League and I have seen firsthand the positive impact that organized sports has on our youth and our community. Our children depend upon organized sports leagues for safe opportunities, and while they are playing ball, they gain experiences and exposure beyond their everyday lives which are critical in shaping their ideas of the possibility for tomorrow. I am proud that our players will have new opportunities."

Sal Paolantonio, ESPN national correspondent:

"One of the things that makes organized sports so important to a community is that it brings people from every walk of life together, introducing people who otherwise likely never would have met, and unites them in their love of sports. Youth sports programs do more than just reflect a community, they build community."

Donald Polk, basketball player, 1989 Camden High graduate, played at Rutgers-Camden and Stockton, and runs Below the Rim Basketball:

"I was able to play basketball as a child, in high school and college, which are times that I will never forget. Now I have the opportunity to coach and run a league for our kids that I am proud to be a part of that teaches our youth the importance of commitment and adversity. I see how our players respond to the competition against their friends and how they challenge themselves every day to get better. Camden needs to provide these opportunities for our student athletes to excel."

Mike Quick, former wide receiver who played his entire career with the Eagles and color commentator for the Eagles radio broadcasts:

“Playing sports as a kid taught me the value of hard work, especially as I got older and the other kids got bigger. Almost nothing good comes in life without hard work, whether it’s studying at school, relationships with friends and family, or being a great athlete. If you want something, you have to work for it, that’s what sports teaches children.”

Karla Robinson, Basketball player, 1985 Camden High graduate, played at Rutgers-Camden:

“Looking back at the fun and the life lessons that I learned playing sports, especially basketball, I could not imagine my life without those opportunities. Basketball has provided me with so many life experiences, the significance of team work and the importance of role models for our children. Sports are an important part of childhood for boys and girls that help prepare them for their futures.”

DaJuan Wagner, Basketball player, former Cleveland Cavalier and 2001 Camden High graduate:

“I loved playing sports growing up. I developed great friends and when there were crowds coming together to cheer on our team there was a great sense of community. I look forward to seeing great sporting events and large crowds across Camden as a result of this effort. This is great.”

Kevin Walls, Basketball player and 1984 Camden High graduate:

“It’s great to see this kind of commitment to the young people of Camden. There is nothing more fun or rewarding than playing and winning a big game after working hard with your teammates. I have many great memories of my days playing at Camden High School and I’m happy to know many Camden children are going to have the opportunity to experience what I did as a result of this effort.”