

Spotlight on Dukes' fans

BY KEVIN WARNER ('02)

Division I student-athletes are often accustomed to being in the spotlight, receiving attention for their accomplishments while also accepting the responsibility that typically accompanies athletic endeavors. JMU student-athletes are committed to redirecting that spotlight to shine on those who so often support them, and during the 2013–14 academic year, JMU athletes completed approximately 4,000 hours of community service.

JMU softball exemplified the commitment to service by winning the department's annual Community Service Award after team members completed 80 hours of independent service.

Other highlights from a year of service by JMU student-athletes included Day with the Dukes, one of the program's largest outreach events. Day with the Dukes welcomes Special Olympians from across Virginia to interact with JMU cheerleaders as well as student-athletes from football and men's and women's basketball. In a partnership with JMU psychology, the day is packed with activities leading up to attendance at a home football game.

JMU also hosted local elementary- and middle-school girls for various physical activities on



Special Olympians from throughout Virginia converge on the JMU campus to interact with JMU cheerleaders and Duke Dog during Day with the Dukes.

National Girls and Women in Sports Day. Student-athletes from volleyball, track and field, soccer, field hockey, and swimming and diving contributed to a day themed as "Passing the Torch, Blazing the Trail."

Numerous sport programs contribute to local schools in varying ways by hosting clinics, reading to youth and serving as after-school aides. JMU football took time out of its summer session to help out at Stone Spring Elementary School's Field Day on June 3. JMU also annually

packs the Convo at two women's basketball games for Duke Dog Reading Day, an event that rewards students for reading success.

The Friends of Jaclyn Foundation pairs children diagnosed with brain tumors with college sports teams to serve as a support network. JMU lacrosse had a two-year bond with Elle Howdershell before she lost her cancer battle on Oct. 12, 2013. The team honored her with a balloon launch and partnered with JMU football to host Elle's brother, Brian, and father, Brian, for behind-the-scenes access at a Nov. 16 game day. JMU baseball also continues its relationship with Justin Brown dating back to the 2009 season. See more photos of

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Working with JMU lacrosse and the Friends of Jaclyn Foundation, JMU football players hosted the late Elle Howdershell's brother, Brian, for behind-the-scenes access at a Nov. 16 football game.